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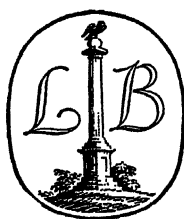
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So Fell the Angels

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So Fell the Angels

by
THOMAS GRAHAM BELDEN
and
MARVA ROBINS BELDEN



With Illustrations

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To Our Parents

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I charge thee, fling away ambition:
By that sin fell the angels.

— SHAKESPEARE, *King Henry VIII*

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Sandy Spring, Maryland

MARVA ROBINS BELDEN

THOMAS GRAHAM BELDEN

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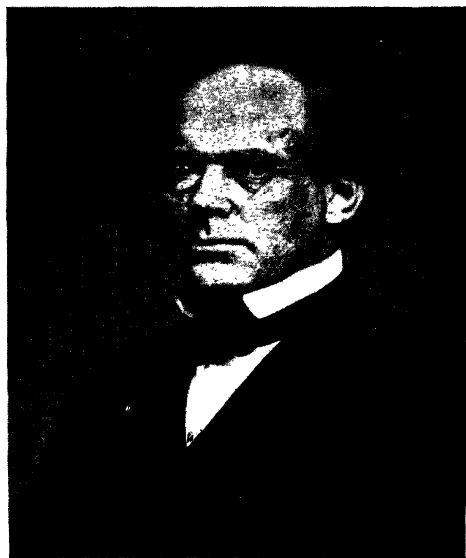
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BOOK ONE



William Sprague
Soldier and Statesman



Salmon Portland Chase
*Portrait of a Man Who
Wore Two Faces*



Wedding Picture of Kate Chase and William Sprague



Kate Chase with the Troops

CHAPTER I

Ambition's Mistress

DARKNESS was enveloping the capital. It was late one March evening in 1861, and the air was heavy with the sweet, decaying fragrance of spring. The carriage stopped, and the girl stepped down beside her father. Before them loomed the Executive Mansion. To their left, beyond the trees standing like giant sentries across the lawn, was the Treasury Building, an immense, imposing silhouette. Had the man and girl glanced in that direction, they would not have seen it, for they were blinded by the lights of the White House flooding through the great glass doors to illuminate the portico. Kate smiled at her father in that curiously triumphant way she had and, taking his arm, walked beside him up the stairs and across the length of the portico to the entrance. The usher bowed, recognizing the Secretary of the Treasury and his daughter, and the Chases crossed the barren hall leading to the President's reception room, where the Cabinet and a few other guests were gathered for the first state dinner of President Lincoln's administration.

The First Lady was carrying on an animated conversation with her guests; but Kate, crossing the room to make the required gesture of respect, could not have failed to notice that her composure was betrayed by the nervous vigor of her fan. During the month or more that the girl had spent in Washington, she had heard some of the malicious stories that secessionist ladies circulated for their amusement, but to her Mrs. Lincoln appeared nothing worse than commonplace — a plump, plain, middle-aged woman of forty-three.

She greeted the Chases with elaborate politeness, and turning to Kate, said, "I shall be glad to see you any time, Miss Chase." She spoke carefully, but her voice still bore a trace of the South.

"Mrs. Lincoln," replied Kate coldly, "I shall be glad to have *you* call on *me* at any time."¹

The hostility in the girl's eyes did not waver as Mrs. Lincoln stared at her, speechless with surprise. The First Lady saw that Kate Chase, like the Southerners, refused to recognize the results of the election the previous autumn, and she knew that the reasons had nothing to do with the questions of slavery or state sovereignty.

Kate was a model of gracious courtesy when she was greeted by President Lincoln. He was wearing his customary ill-fitting, wrinkled suit of black, and as usual he looked as if he had just been roused from a nap. The President was a man of extremes—a towering, lank figure with tremendous hands and feet. His hair rose in an unmanageable bristling ruff of black, and his ears and nose, like caricatures, projected too boldly from his strange face. Looking at her father, Kate saw that he had the classical proportions Lincoln lacked. Lincoln would always look like a backwoodsman, even in the White House; Salmon Portland Chase could look like nothing but a statesman. Like the President he was a massive man, more than six feet tall, but instead of stooping shoulders and pendulous arms, he had a balanced, compact body held stiffly erect, and his well-tailored coat fitted his broad shoulders faultlessly. To Kate he was the incarnation of classical marble beauty, reminiscent of the busts of Roman senators enshrined in Victorian parlors. She did not see that his pale, expressionless, clean-shaven face was marred slightly by a peculiar expression about his eyes. The lid of one had a disfiguring droop as if it had suffered some permanent injury long ago; the effect was to give his face an arresting duality, as if two men, rather than one, looked out upon the world. When he talked, Chase had an unpleasant habit of contracting his eyelids as if he were turning his sight in upon himself. He spoke ponderously, with a trace of the lisp that had troubled him since his childhood, and he had a way of uttering even the most commonplace observation as if it were an incontrovertible moral axiom. He was a serious man, aloof with frozen dignity, lacking completely that spark of unquenchable good humor that lightened the melancholy face of the President. Even his closest friends had never penetrated his icy reticence. One and all

they found him cold and unimpulsive, with a reserve that repelled familiarity. One admirer said in his defense, "Had he been more cordial he would have been less dignified. . . ." A Western wit put the case more bluntly. "If you would succeed in life," he said of no one in particular, "you must be solemn, solemn as an ass. All the great monuments of the earth have been built over solemn asses."² Above all, Chase was determined to succeed. Kate, aware that beneath that controlled exterior was a man of great passion, knew that he would.

Not long after the Chases arrived, the party moved into the state dining room, where dinner was served in severe republican simplicity. Slowly Kate looked around her, taking in every detail—the worn upholstery on the chairs, the scars on the paint and plaster, the drab colors of the walls. She was satisfied. Some day this house would be hers. She assessed the other guests with the same penetrating scrutiny. The wives of the other Cabinet officials unwittingly disclosed the long years of struggle and waiting that had brought them and their husbands to the summit of power. Kate had not been forced to learn patience before joining them. Few women as young as she had ever entered the inner circle of Washington society. The elder daughter of her widowed father, she was his hostess and companion at state functions—at twenty the woman ranking fourth in official Washington circles.

Kate Chase was not awed by her eminence. As she conversed with the guests that evening, her vivacious eyes sparkling, it was clear that she was entirely at home in the dining room that had once belonged to John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, and completely at ease with military and naval officers, Cabinet members, and the President. Perhaps it was the consciousness of her beauty that gave her that public serenity and poise remarkable for one so young. She was tall and slender, with a natural grace of movement that no French dancing master would have been able to impart. And she had a way of standing with her head tilted slightly upward, a faint, almost disdainful smile upon her face, as if she were a titled English lady posing in a formal garden for Gainsborough or Reynolds. But Renoir had painted her skin, pale and soft, the color of moonlight, and Innes had created her hair with the rich tones of autumn, red-gold and copper and mahogany. Drawn

severely back from her face and wound in a Grecian knot at her neck, it was a dramatic foil for her eyes—large, dark, inquiring eyes, variable and remote, with long black lashes and crescent eyebrows. Despite her Renaissance coloring, there was something cold and unapproachable about her, a diamond brilliance that was at its heart like the icy grandeur of her father. It was easy to envision her walking majestically through the long stone corridors of an Italian palace or entering the nave of Saint Étienne for her daily devotions. Immediately Washington society had been intrigued by the exquisite newcomer in its midst.³ Before long people would be calling her an American queen.

Kate's dinner partners that evening discovered that she had a charm even more rare than her cameo beauty. They were frankly amazed at her conversation—intelligent and discriminating, enlivened by a trenchant wit. She talked easily, with a low melodious voice, choosing her words with care, as if she were consciously calculating their effect. It was obvious that she had a keen mind, quick and forceful, with a masculine regard for hard logic; but being a woman and being intelligent, she also knew how to intrigue the most preoccupied politician with the beguiling small talk of society. Under her spell men would be tempted to forget the troubling question of Federal forts in Southern territory and the weighty problems of patronage. William Howard Russell, the disdainful roving eye of the *London Times*, met Kate for the first time at the dinner, and even that impassive old terrapin was won. An attractive woman, he thought to himself, agreeable and sprightly.⁴ Most Americans would think her miraculous—a corsage of fresh spring flowers on the body politic.

The dinner proceeded pleasantly. The President told a few of his famous Western stories, and the guests eventually adjourned in high spirits to the drawing room, where they were joined by more politicians. All the while Lincoln appeared to be in good humor, joking and talking with his advisers; but, after Kate and most of the other guests had gone home, after the candles in the East Room had been extinguished and the state dining room cleared and put in order, it was a troubled President who was left alone with his Cabinet. He had asked them to remain after the party to discuss an urgent problem facing the

government: General Winfield Scott, commander of the Federal armies, had recommended evacuating Fort Sumter, arguing that the act would "soothe and give confidence" to the slave states that had not seceded.⁵

The Federal forts were thorns in the side of the sensitive South, and from the day of his inauguration President Lincoln had been troubled by the question of what his administration should do about them. Even before the state dinner he had consulted his Cabinet on the problem, but their opinion had been divided, with only one favoring a strong policy regardless of the consequences. Chase had taken the stand that, if aiding the forts would cause civil war, he was against taking action; but civil war being unlikely, he thought the forts should be provisioned. All during March, Lincoln had hesitated, but delay was no longer possible. Unless provisioned immediately, Fort Sumter would fall.

On through the night in the darkened White House the voices of eight men rose and fell, advancing this argument and that objection, defending Scott, criticizing his judgment. Finally, Lincoln asked each of his advisers to present him a second written opinion on the question the following day so that he could make his final decision. The fateful meeting closed, and the Cabinet members filed out into the warm spring night and made their way homeward through the sleeping city.⁶

While the President held that secret conference in the White House, Russell, the correspondent of the *London Times*, returned to Willard's Hotel. The mood in its halls, bars, and waiting rooms was a striking contrast to the gravity of the Cabinet meeting. Triumphant Republicans from every quarter of the North had converged at Willard's to hover over the Federal government like turkey buzzards over a dying body. With their attention on the political spoils, they were heedless of the momentous dialogue in the high councils of state, a dialogue that seemed a thin, insubstantial whisper beneath their insistent clamor.

"The hum and bustle in the hotel tonight was wonderful," wrote Russell in his journal. "All the office-seekers were in the passages, hungering after senators and representatives, and the ladies in any way relative to influential people, had an entourage of courtiers sedulously paying their respects." The charming Miss Chase had told him that she

was already being pestered by applicants for her father's good offices and by people seeking introduction to her as means of making demands on Uncle Sam. Russell reflected for a moment and then wrote, "The majority confer power, but they seem to forget that it is only the minority who can enjoy the first fruits of success."⁷

Russell would have been mistaken indeed if he had thought that the Chases were not determined to be among that minority. Chase would not become so involved in the problem of Fort Sumter that he would ever neglect his friends. A determined candidate for the Presidency, Chase, more than any other Cabinet official, was ready and willing to do business with the camp followers at Willard's, and if he could not accommodate all his friends in the bulging Treasury Department, he would demand places for them in other government offices. Already he and his daughter were at work stealthily building up a machine, a far-reaching purposeful band of men disciplined to a single object: putting him in the White House in 1864. The young girl and her father had before them a perfect opportunity to undo the blind workings of chance that had put the Lincolns in the place they were convinced was theirs. By giving Chase the Treasury Department, with more patronage at his disposal than any other Cabinet member, Lincoln himself had given them the power. Now all they needed was time — and money.

For fifty-three years Chase had struggled along the tortuous road leading to the White House. He had been born into a respected New England family numbering many leaders of state and church, including a Senator and an Episcopal bishop. Chase's father, however, had been a humble man of little education who supported his ten children by operating a New Hampshire tavern, distillery, and glass factory with indifferent success; and at his death, when Chase was a boy of nine, the family was destitute. When one of the successful members of the family, Uncle Philander Chase, an Episcopal bishop, offered to take over his education, Chase's mother gratefully agreed.

Gladly putting down his Greek Testament, the boy set out by flatboat and horseback on the long adventurous trip to the wilderness of Ohio, where his uncle operated a church school. In bleak New England, Ohio

was said to be El Dorado, where cucumbers grew on trees and springs bubbled up water like New England rum, but the young boy found that, instead of rum, the springs of the West yielded vinegar. Bishop Chase was a joylessly consecrated minister of the Holy Word who would have hobbled his whole flock rather than see one lamb go astray. His motto was "God will provide," but that did not mean that man or boy could rest.⁸ Like the Puritan elect, ceaselessly exorcising themselves to secure their preordained salvation, the boys at Bishop Chase's school were set to work to insure that God would provide. Young Chase took grain to the mill, milked cows, and carried wool to the carding factory; but he found that no matter how hard he worked he could not satisfy his energetic uncle.

For three long years, first at Worthington and later in Cincinnati, where Bishop Chase took over the city's college, Salmon strove to please the wrathful God that watched him through the terrible eyes of the bishop. It would be many years later before Salmon Chase would remember his uncle without bitterness, but the cleric made his mark on the boy. The grim discipline, the heroic battles of conscience, the addiction to sanctimonious ritualism and theology, the moral, almost Zoroastrian philosophy that conceived of the world as a battleground of the forces of darkness and light: all these traits of Philander Chase were painfully traced on the character of Salmon P. Chase, the son of a New Hampshire tavern keeper.

The boy finally returned to his family in New England and, after working a few months, saved enough money to enter Dartmouth, where five of his uncles had graduated. He was happier there than he had been in Ohio. He joined a fraternity and, although he was not a particularly brilliant student, was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society. Two years later, upon graduating, he set out to find a job to pay his debts and help send other members of his family to school. His gentle mother sent him away with her blessing: "Be *good* my son & that will be *great* for me."⁹ Chase wanted both goodness and greatness, and it seemed to him then that there would be no need to sacrifice one for the other.

Early in the winter of 1826, the eighteen-year-old boy arrived nearly

penniless in Washington, D. C., and entered a hopeful advertisement in the press for a select classical school of twenty students; but in spite of his excellent references—Henry Clay, Secretary of State, and two United States Senators—only one scholar, not twenty, appeared. Next Chase tried to get a job as clerk in the Treasury Department. Failing, he turned in desperation to his uncle Dudley Chase, Senator from Vermont. A firm believer in Yankee independence, the Senator looked sternly at his nephew and said, "I once spoiled a fellow by getting him such a position. I will lend you fifty cents to buy a spade, but I cannot get you a clerkship." The boy politely turned down the offer and finally managed to get a teaching position at Mr. Plumly's fashionable preparatory school, where most of the Cabinet members sent their sons.¹⁰

Philander Chase had neglected educational for moral standards, and young Chase found that in spite of his two years at Dartmouth, he had to study diligently to keep ahead of his students. He soon decided that teaching was a thankless if noble career and laid plans to use his free time preparing for a profession such as the ministry or law, fields that received the thanks they merited as well as offering him an opportunity to be a dispenser of rules, the stern embodiment of authority. No matter what he would do in the future, there would always be something of the schoolmaster about Chase. Even at eighteen he was forever scolding his friends about mistakes in composition; and as a lawyer, politician, and father he would be an unrelenting pedagogue, urging everyone around him to strive for perfection. Being a bishop would have suited his character well, but, perhaps because of his unpleasant memories of his uncle, he chose law instead.¹¹

Even as a young man Chase had a "tropism for the 'best people,'" and through one of his students he got himself admitted as a law student in the office of Attorney General William Wirt. That highly respected jurist quickly took a liking to him and invited him to his home, one of the most beautiful mansions in the city at that time. Wirt's five young daughters impressed young Chase as remarkably intelligent and accomplished. He whiled away many a pleasant hour with them and wrote them elaborate tributes in verse, but if he fancied he might fall in love, he brought himself up sharply with the reminder that

women were incumbrances for an impecunious young man just beginning the study of law. ". . . it cannot be, says the stern voice of Cold Reason, it cannot be." ¹² His frivolity troubled him profoundly, and frequently he returned to his room at night after an indolent afternoon with the Wirt family to make mighty resolutions to his heavy conscience that on the morrow he would "press on again in the race of virtue, of learning and science to the goal of virtuous and holy reputation." ¹³ Chase sought the reputation as much as the virtue and holiness, and to that end he plodded wearily through law book after law book. Finally, three years after arriving in Washington, he passed his examinations. At last he was ready to start upon the serious business of life — his career.

He decided to return to Ohio, not because his memories of his school days there were pleasant, but because he "would rather be first twenty years hence at Cincinnati" than at any other city. Anticipating the buoyant hope of an Ohioan who would say, "I believe our Queen City will soon be renowned for something besides hogs," Chase was convinced that the West, and especially Cincinnati, was "marked out for a high destiny in the councils of heaven." ¹⁴ He was equally certain that he would have a place on the high dais. He would grow with this country, and if some day he should return to Washington, it would not be as a penniless student.

Frances Trollope thought Cincinnati a "*triste* little town." The fun-loving Englishwoman wrote in despair, "I never saw any people who appeared to live so much without amusement as the Cincinnatians. To sell a pack of cards in Ohio subjects the dealer to a penalty of fifty dollars. They have no balls; they have no concerts; they have no dinner parties. . . ." Chase, on the other hand, thought the city "a magnificent abode of civilization, opulence, taste, and power." Mrs. Trollope's catalogue of shortcomings was his list of virtues. He was perfectly satisfied with the social life provided by the Semi-colon, a literary society given to judicious discussions of literature and lemonade and cakes. ¹⁵

In the spring of 1830 he settled down in town to practice law, support

his indigent relatives who poured out of New England to join him, and gradually make his way to the top of society. Success was not immediate, but he used his unwelcome leisure to revise and edit a book of the statutes of Ohio, published with his able introduction—a history of the state and its development. It was an ambitious undertaking for a young man of twenty-two, and, although it made him little money, it brought him attention and eventually some clients.¹⁶

When the stern voice of reason no longer inveighed against marriage, Chase considered falling in love. He had never been indifferent toward women, but, as in his relations with the Wirt sisters, he had always coldly supervised his feelings. About one young lady he wrote rhapsodically in his diary, "Her face . . . is beautiful in feature and still more beautiful in expression. Even her looks of anger and scorn have a pretty gracefulness which half disarms them. Her form is light and frail, but exquisitely molded. Her motion is free as the summer's breeze, and, like it, soft and gentle, or animated and unreserved. Every word and tone of hers is sweet music, sweeter, because, like the tones of the wind through the harp, they are unsubjected to the rules of art." The young lawyer, however, was not seduced by his own poetry. He concluded solemnly, "I was very near falling in love with this lady—nay, I should certainly have done so, had not our tastes been, in one particular, wholly dissimilar. She is fond of the gay world—I have no desire to partake in its vanities. *She is disinclined to religion and its duties. I value them more than any earthly possession.*"¹⁷

Desire and conscience would never be at peace in Chase, and the conflict that raged in his heart never let him be happy, except perhaps once when he found that his desires would not submit to the ironbound dictation of conscience. One New Year's Day, as he was walking down a street in Cincinnati, he was passed by a sleigh drawn by four prancing horses. Among the laughing girls within, he noticed Catherine Garniss, the belle of Cincinnati, an engaging dark-eyed beauty, cultured, cosmopolitan, much admired. Chase found himself strangely troubled by the memory of that instant all during the winter while she was away in New Orleans and on into summer when she went to the fashionable resort at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia.¹⁸ Struggling

with his touchy conscience, which chided him for his worldliness, Salmon P. Chase courted and won her when she returned. He found he could love someone who was not formed in his own image and likeness, and for a brief time he was happy.

Chase was not then the impressive marble figure of 1861, and Catherine had some reservations about her earnest, awkward fiancé. Apologizing to a friend for not bringing him along for an introduction, she said half facetiously, "He is so uncouth, and has such an unmanageable mouth! Wait until I polish him up a little — then I will bring him to you and show him off." ¹⁹

In the spring of 1834 they were married at the home of Catherine's parents in Cincinnati. Chase was twenty-six; his bride was twenty-three. A daughter born eight months later was named for Catherine.²⁰ Kitty immediately fell ill with childbed fever, but Chase, reassured by her doctor that she was not in serious danger, went to Philadelphia on legal business. Two weeks after the birth of her first child, enchanting Catherine was dead. Chase's grief was black with remorse. He forever blamed himself for not having stayed at her side during her illness, and he seemed to fear that he was being punished by a jealous God for adoring Kitty, for loving her without reservations.²¹ Desperately Chase sought consolation in religion, but he was to find that his wife's death had left a void in his life that nothing would ever fill.

Four years later he married a child of seventeen, Eliza Ann Smith. A few months afterward the child of his first marriage died of scarlet fever, and he was left without any memorial to Catherine Jane Garniss. The following summer, on a hot August night, another daughter was born. Chase, keeping a long, prayerful vigil, came into his wife's bedroom for a few moments to see the child; and later in the faint light of early morning, he wrote in his diary:²²

Born August 13, 1840 at 2 A.M., Catherine Jane Chase, [the] 2nd, daughter of S.P.C. . . .

The *babe* is pronounced pretty. I think it quite otherwise. It is, however, well formed and I am thankful. May God give the child a good understanding that she may keep his commandments.

The child was to bear the name of his first wife. To Chase it seemed that it could be no other way.

Katie remembered little of the last few years of her mother's life: of two sisters born and buried, of a strange illness consuming her mother's vitality, of trips to health resorts, a hushed house and troubled aunts, and finally, in the autumn after Kate's fifth birthday, of death. With the passing of the years Kate's memory of her mother clouded and slipped back deeper and deeper into her consciousness until her mother was the face of the fair young girl in an old-fashioned bonnet whose portrait hung in her father's house. From her earliest childhood it was her father who dominated her consciousness. It was he who bent low to kiss her gently at night, and it was he who began each day with a sober reading of the Scriptures. He was a great man, tall, impressive, and strong; and for a time after Kate's mother died, he was entirely hers.

Throughout the long winter after Eliza's death, Kate was her father's consolation. Before sunrise they began the day together at breakfast with Chase's sister Alice. Kate would nod with the solemn rhythms of her father's voice as he read the Scriptures, and she would wait impatiently for evening, when her father returned to Clifton Farm, their home outside the city. Together they would sit in their dimly lit parlor while Kate read a poem or a passage from the Bible. The endless security of their routine reached through spring into summer, but with the chill of autumn came disaster. Into the sufficiency of her life, her father brought another wife, a young lady taller than Kate, a young lady who took her place at the already perfect circle at the breakfast table and read the Bible with a soft voice in the evenings. At the death of Kate's mother Chase had been close to bankruptcy, with debts amounting to almost eleven thousand dollars. Fourteen months later he allied himself with the distinguished Ludlow family that had founded Cincinnati by marrying Sarah Bella Dunlop Ludlow, a client whose inheritance of twelve thousand dollars he had helped arrange in the settlement of the Ludlow estate.²³

Katie grew angry and rebellious. Chase wrote sadly in his diary: "This evening little Kate disobeyed her stepmother & made untrue

representation; admonished her & promised to punish her, if I could not otherwise induce her to amend." Her father preferred reading her a bit of verse to help her surrender, and many times that winter their heads bent together over the Bible in search of family peace. In less than a year was born another daughter, Janette Ralston, named for Chase's mother. Deciding that it would be best for all if Kate went away for a time, Chase started off with her on the long trip to the fashionable school of Miss Henrietta B. Haines at Forty-ninth and Madison Avenue in New York City.

Miss Haines was a tall, thin-lipped, aristocratic woman, an academic high priestess in imperishable black gown with stiff white linen collar and cuffs. Her school was a cloister, stripped of daring and temptation, designed to instill a lasting immunity from the dangers of reality. The days began at six with prayers, breakfast, and a morning walk. Then there were lessons in music, history, languages, and elocution, composition and drawing. In the afternoons there was a brief free hour before dinner. The day ended with the evening study hour under the stern proctorship of the ticking clock. Occasionally on Saturday afternoon an omnibus was hired to carry the young ladies for a ride in the country or to the make-believe world of the Hippodrome Theater. On Thursday nights there were formal receptions for distinguished guests, and the students filed past Miss Haines, now resplendent in ebony velvet and real lace, into the drawing room, where, like little dons being schooled in civilized patience, they were to sit stiffly demure throughout an evening of edifying talk.²⁴ For nine years Kate had to accept the narrow boundaries of this vacuous world. At Miss Haines's school she learned a lasting contempt for respectability.

Kate was expected to acquire a veneer of graciousness and accomplishment, and those lessons she learned well. She studied the artifices of society, the proper words, the poses, the gestures. She learned how to waltz and how to manage her riding habit at a canter in the wilds of northern Manhattan. She roomed with Mlle. Janon, her French teacher, and soon surpassed her father's mastery of the language. Being a lady appealed to Kate in one respect: she could indulge her love for beautiful clothes, which offered some escape from her drab life and her fierce

loneliness. She sent her father staggering bills for bonnets and boots, yards of crossbarred muslin, linen, and silk, "all for personal adornment," signed with a businesslike notation in her spidery handwriting: "I have examined this bill and find everything correct. C. J. Chase."²⁵ Her father's recent marriage had enabled him to pay some of his debts, but his own earnings continued to be meager. Nonetheless, being preoccupied with his law practice and politics and the fatal illness of his third wife, Chase allowed Kate her extravagance without a word of reproof.

At Christmas and Easter beautiful clothes did not abridge the distance between Clifton Farm in Ohio and Miss Haines's school in New York. Occasionally Kate had visits from New England relatives or from one of her father's friends, like Senator Charles Sumner, a chill Bostonian who thought Kate "very intelligent."²⁶ But no one could substitute for her father. She resolved that never again, no matter what her fortune might be, would she find herself separated from him. No one except her father offered a prize worthy of all the exquisite mannerisms in which she was being schooled. He was her god and her religion; and when at last she would be released from her exile, she would devote herself to him with all the passionate intensity of her nature. She would become indispensable to him so that never again could he send her away.

Her father was a solitary man, austere reserved with his fellow men; but with Kate, as with no other human being, he was at ease. During her summer vacations, she would drive with him to and from his law office in Cincinnati, and Chase would talk to her of his problems. His wife was too ill to listen, and he found Kate attentive and intelligent. Neither Chase the ambitious young lawyer nor Chase the crusading politician could enter the imaginative world of a child, and so he brought young Kate into his world of documents, speeches, and letters. Kate strained to understand this complex grown-up world of black and white. She fed upon every expression, every inflection, every reaction of her father; and what she learned, she learned in the simple, brightly contrasting colors of a child's mind. Kate's little sister Nettie would one day remark, ". . . children . . . observe and think far more

than their elders give them credit for; and perhaps the very indifference with which their presence is regarded gives them opportunities of seeing people as they are that an older person might not have." ²⁷ It may be that eventually Kate understood her father even better than he did himself, for grownups sometimes have complicated ways of thinking about simple things. The world of the big people is struggle, she discovered, and ambition makes it move.

Her father had started upon his career in Cincinnati with the motto "I shall strive to be first wherever I may be, let what success will attend the effort. . . ." As a young man he had filled his memo book with stirring exhortations: "Despise the Miserable Cant that you can't succeed. Endeavor is success." ²⁸ Those mottoes were engraved on Kate's heart.

Her father put his struggle for prominence into the language of old Bishop Philander Chase. Life for Salmon P. Chase was a gigantic morality play, complex in the number of players but simple in its issues. Life was a struggle between the forces of good and evil; the good was obvious, uncomplicated, undiluted. It had been natural for him to turn from law to politics, for there the drama of good and evil was played on the grandest scale with the soul of the republic as the prize. There too Chase could find satisfaction for his driving desire to be first. In professions such as law, the man who is pre-eminent is often hard to discern, but in politics the man of power has a title—Senator, Governor, even President—and the entire nation watches him practice his daily trade.

Chase dedicated his public career with noble resolve: "In the discussion of political questions or measures let me avoid all bitterness, peevishness, and ill natured satire; letting it be seen that I do not contend for victory, but for truth; not for selfish or party advantages, but for the best interests of my country; not with a factious or contentious spirit, but with a deep conviction that duty requires one to act as I do. . . ." He prayed earnestly to be delivered "from a too eager thirst for the applause and favor of men," ²⁹ but as he drew close to the summit of power, Chase lifted his bowed head and looked about him with bright, acquisitive eyes. The closer he came to ultimate success, the less distinct became the carefully drawn line between victory and truth, between

selfish advantage and national interest. He still struggled toward "the goal of virtuous and holy reputation," but he made compromises when he thought them expedient.

Kate was spared the ambiguities that tortured her father. He passed on to her only part of the Chase tradition—the fire, the passion, the driving desire—but the doubts, the troubling questions of conscience, the appetite for goodness he reserved for himself. He had meant to spare Kate his own conflicts. He had meant to resolve his own inner wars with a clear declaration for righteousness in the lives of his daughters. He had read Kate the Bible and prayed fervently with her. But she had heard only the uncertainty in his voice. If Kate knew of the intensity of the deadly quarrel her father had with himself, she also knew of its inevitable outcome, that above all he was ambitious. She knew that to serve his ambition was to make herself indispensable to him; and when she returned to Miss Haines's school after a happy summer with her father, she puzzled over the problems that vexed him. While most of her schoolmates were thinking of the coming cotillion, Kate worried about the coming election.

It was sufficient for Kate that her father won elections. She cared nothing about the issues. To Chase elections and issues were inseparable. In politics he needed a righteous cause; he had to be convinced that he was not only the choice of the people, but also one of God's elect. In the cause of the slave, Chase found a political issue that answered his need to be a crusader. As a boy in Cincinnati on his way to the mill or carding factory, he had looked across the Ohio River to see Negro slaves toiling in the Kentucky tobacco fields, and in Washington he had found slave markets within the shadow of the Capitol. When he returned to Ohio to make his name in politics and law, he enlisted in the fight to end slavery.

The friends who laughed at the quixotic young lawyer saw him win national prominence for his troubles. Two years after Kate was born, nine slaves escaped across the Ohio River from slave Kentucky into free Ohio with the aid of an old man named John Vanzandt. When Vanzandt was sued for abduction, Chase defended him. The case was lost before the Supreme Court, but Chase found himself a

man of national importance. Harriet Beecher Stowe, who, like Chase, looked down upon the South from the heights of Cincinnati, used Vanzandt as John Van Trompe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Chase became the famed "Attorney-General for Runaway Slaves." On the sideboard of his dining room for years afterward always stood a pitcher given him by the colored people of Cincinnati as a token of their gratitude for his help to their race.³⁰

His world enlarged: he became acquainted with leading antislavery men throughout the country; he wrote letters, gave lectures, contributed articles to journals, and attended political conventions. By 1848, the year after Kate went away to finishing school, he had become prominent enough to preside over a national convention to nominate a presidential candidate on a platform calling for the prohibition of slavery in the territories. Although Van Buren, his presidential candidate, lost the election, Chase maneuvered himself into the United States Senate by making a secret bargain with the opposition in the state legislature, giving his enemies control of that body in exchange for the Senate seat.³¹

After almost twenty years' absence Chase returned to Washington, to both the familiar and the strange. There were still slave markets within the shadow of the Capitol, and the giants of Chase's youth — Clay and Webster and Calhoun — were still there, presenting their last great arguments and hammering out their last compromise on the same intractable issue of slavery. But the voices of the giants were cracking. Emerson called Webster a "dead elephant." A new spirit was abroad; unfamiliar voices were being raised; old parties and dependencies were dissolving. Chase had arrived in time for the Great Debate of 1850.

The territory won in the Mexican War threatened to upset the precarious balance of power guarding the peace between the slave and free states. Sensing that, unless countered, time and the railroads would spell final political dominance of the North, Calhoun was willing to force the issue for the slave states. Clay, the aging architect of compromise, and Webster, the final orator of concession, besought their countrymen for conciliation. When their thunderous call for reason died away, another voice was heard, that of Salmon P. Chase speaking out

against the extension of slavery in the territories. His stand was too extreme for the Democrats, but it did not go far enough for the ragged band of abolitionists opposed to slavery in the territories and in the South.⁸² In the Senate, Chase stood almost alone against the forces of moderation, and the giants prevailed.

Chase was joined by the elegant Bostonian and merciless crusader Charles Sumner. Striding through the halls of the Capitol, they were impressive men, towering over six feet tall, dressed in dark-blue broadcloth coats with brass buttons, white waistcoats, and black trousers. Few were their followers, and unrespectable was their cause, but in their isolation they took comfort in their enormous, steadfast self-righteousness. They were, as Sumner said, practitioners in "morals rather than in politics."⁸³

It was not long before Chase began to move away from his early position on slavery, and by 1852 he and Sumner were organizing a group of abolitionists and proclaiming that "slavery is a sin against God and a crime against man. . . ." A bishop in politics, Chase was a man hard to argue with and impossible to conciliate. The Senate did not take kindly to his recondite speeches, burdened with Latin and Biblical quotations. A wise man once said, "God and the people hate a chesty man." Observing Chase's superior, pompous demeanor, his senatorial colleague from Ohio said wickedly, "Chase is a good man, but his theology is unsound. He thinks there is a fourth person in the Trinity." Another critic later remarked uncharitably, "Salmon P. Chase must really have been a good man before he fell in love with his own goodness."⁸⁴

In 1854 Chase and Sumner stood together against Stephen Douglas's explosive Kansas-Nebraska Bill, providing for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the substitution of a new formula of popular sovereignty, leaving the decision of whether the territories would be slave or free to their inhabitants. Taking advantage of Douglas's courtesy in providing him with an advance copy of the proposal, Chase called a secret meeting of his friends and issued "An Appeal to the Independent Democrats," a scathing personal attack on Douglas, accusing him of selling out to the South in order to further his presidential

ambitions.³⁵ The "Appeal" was deceitful and unfair, but it was effective. Throughout the North, cities suffered the lurid brightness of Douglas's burning effigy, and town halls were crowded with angry people. From those people the unborn Republican Party would draw strength in two years. "The Little Giant" roared his anger, and the Senator from Ohio apologized reluctantly. Douglas got his bill, but the ultimate victory went to Chase. He and Sumner no longer stood alone. Arousing passions that would not easily be dissipated, the fiery, wrathful "Appeal" dealt a deathblow to the moribund party alignment and paved the way for extreme feelings and extreme action.³⁶ Chase saw the advantages of substituting morality for moderation in politics.

In 1856 Chase left the Senate to become the first Republican governor of Ohio. In his campaign he watered down his crusade for democratic equality by courting the antforeign, anti-Catholic Know Nothing Party. In the spring Kate graduated from Miss Haines's school and, her trunks packed with the latest Eastern fashions, returned to Ohio and her father. Education and maturity had softened the unregenerate spirit no more than Bible lessons, but Kate came back home to find her rival gone. Her father's third wife having died on his forty-fourth birthday, Kate could now claim him as her own. She would be a mother to her nine-year-old half sister Nettie, a quiet, reserved child who had grown up under the pall of her mother's long illness. Aunt Alice, who had survived as her father's housekeeper throughout the bitter succession of deaths, became a pale figure behind the imperial Miss Chase. A young lady of sixteen is an ornament, but a New England spinster of fifty-one can be only chastely insignificant. The family moved from Clifton Farm, infected with the deathly hush of illness, to a fine stucco mansion with Gothic windows and towering chimneys in Columbus, where her father was to take up his new duties as governor.³⁷

For a time, at Mr. Heyl's seminary in Columbus, Kate dabbled indifferently in oil painting and music lessons, which were to absorb the limbo between finishing school and marriage for the Victorian lady.³⁸ Little Nettie grew excited over her own pen-and-ink drawings, but Kate was bored with those diversions. Her tumultuous nature could

scarcely find expression in unassembled pigments, afternoon teas, or charity committees. Kate's years in New York had taught her contempt for women, even for their aspiration to be rescued from their listless pursuit of art by some appropriate young man. Compared to her father, other men seemed a colorless lot, agreeable as appendages to her self-esteem, but dispensable as long as she dominated that most desirable of audiences. Except for her father, Kate cared little about what people thought of her.

Friends marveled at what a handsome and devoted couple Chase and Kate were, and they complimented the governor on his clever, attractive daughter, who seemed to replace memories and dead wives. Some of his associates were surprised that Chase, so astringent in most of his relationships, could inspire such adulation in his elder daughter. It was clear that to Kate her father was something more than a father. He was perfection; she idolized him. His hopes were her hopes, and his disappointments left emptiness in two hearts. She did everything in her power to fill the gaps in his life so that he would not in his loneliness seek another Mrs. Chase. She read and talked with him, and in the long winter evenings, when he put away his correspondence and state papers, they played chess together. Together they went over his correspondence from all parts of the North. Together they assayed Chase's political fortunes, and together they nurtured a great hope: one day Chase would be President of the United States, and Kate would take her place at his side as First Lady of the land.

Chase's future was bound up with the prospering fight against slavery, and he and Kate anxiously watched the tumultuous argument grow more and more heated. John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry galvanized the country. One of Chase's closest friends, the mysterious Gerrit Smith, was rumored to have been among Brown's financial backers. When the raid failed, Smith went insane for six months. On his recovery Chase sent him a letter expressing relief that he had survived the shock.³⁹

During the troubled winter and early spring of 1860, as the crucial presidential election neared, the Chases entertained an increasing number of important officials and politicians from all parts of the North. One

of their visitors was Carl Schurz, the volatile German political refugee who was making a new and brilliant career in the United States—a thin, wiry man who crackled with nervous energy, talked incessantly, and, to the delight of Nettie, had a habit of using strange, foreign gestures to punctuate his arguments. During his stay in Columbus, Schurz was invited to one of the famous political breakfasts given by the Chases, and years afterward he remembered Kate's dramatic entrance into the dining room that morning:⁴⁰

[She] saluted me very kindly, and then let herself down upon her chair with the graceful lightness of a bird that, folding its wings, perches upon the branch of a tree. She was then about eighteen [twenty] years old, tall and slender, and exceedingly well formed. Her features were not at all regularly beautiful according to the classic rule. Her little nose, somewhat audaciously tipped up, would perhaps not have passed muster with a severe critic, but it fitted pleasingly into her face with its large, languid but at the same time vivacious hazel eyes, shaded by long dark lashes and arched over by proud eyebrows. The fine forehead was framed in waving, gold-brown hair. She had something imperial in the pose of the head, and all her movements possessed an exquisite natural charm. No wonder that she came to be admired as a great beauty and broke many hearts. After the usual polite commonplaces, the conversation at the breakfast table, in which Miss Kate took a lively and remarkably intelligent part, soon turned upon politics. . . .

Chase wanted the Republican nomination; and acting on the theory that "if he wanted the office he should ask for it," he sent forth a stream of letters reminding party stalwarts of his long service in their cause.⁴¹ By spring Chase's letters were shrilly insistent; but the response, although promising, was far from decisive. Chase's optimism soared beyond that of his friends. He saw only two rivals—the ancient patriarch of Missouri, Edward Bates, and the shrewd, powerful New Yorker, William Seward.

In May, 1860, when the discordant band of politicians gathered in Chicago to nominate the Republican candidate for the Presidency, they

had one common principle—opposition to slavery—but they offered as many diverse solutions to this problem as they did candidates. The Ohio delegation was the steward of Chase's hopes, but to his indignation he found that he could not command their unanimous support as Ohio's favorite son. He, along with Seward, Bates, and Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, went down in defeat before a dark horse—Abraham Lincoln. "The hardest kind of death to die is that occasioned by lukewarm friends," wrote a friend to Chase afterward. Chase hid his feelings in impassive notes to Lincoln, congratulating him primly, first on his nomination and later on his election;⁴² and he, who had accepted the governorship of Ohio as a strategic springboard to the Presidency, was relieved to spring back into his old Senate seat.

Lincoln knew that the fires celebrating electoral victory had not welded the diverse segments of his party into a unity. The familiar American party system had been shattered by industrialism, sectionalism, the movement westward, and above all by the question of slavery; and the newly formed Republican Party was nothing more than a residue of sharp fragments. Lincoln, preparing himself and the government for great trials, set about the difficult task of selecting a Cabinet that would represent and unite the party.⁴³

In December, 1860, after months of disquieting silence, Chase received a note from the President-elect, asking him to come to Illinois at his earliest convenience. If the Senator was surprised, it was only at Lincoln's delay. Chase, if not Lincoln, had already taken himself under consideration as Secretary of State.⁴⁴ Gossip gave William H. Seward the first position in the Cabinet, but Chase made the long trip from Columbus to Springfield anyway.

He found his host genial if mystifying. Several times Lincoln visited him at his hotel and on Sunday accompanied him to church; but when they settled down to discuss the all-important question of the Cabinet, Lincoln was so evasive that Chase returned to Ohio puzzled about why the hasty visit had been necessary in the first place. Honest Abe appeared to be playing a canny political shell game, assuring Chase that he could have the post of Secretary of State on the condition that Seward refused it, an unlikely possibility, and asking if Chase would ac-

cept the position of Secretary of the Treasury without actually offering it to him. When their talks were finished, the Senator observed sullenly that in essence Lincoln had offered him nothing more than a few hours of companionship in a strange city. Chase remained severely noncommittal, but Lincoln, who read men's intent rather than their words, listened and was satisfied. The day after his inauguration, the President, without further consulting Chase, presented his name to the Senate for confirmation as Secretary of the Treasury. Unlike the other Cabinet appointees, Chase sulked two days at the President's presumption; but finally, bowing to what he called the clamor of his friends, he accepted.⁴⁵

Kate was almost twenty-one when, in the spring of 1861, she arrived in Washington to witness her father's appointment to Lincoln's Cabinet. She was relieved to forsake the narrow provincialism of Columbus society with its malicious gossip and prying eyes. In Washington she would be surrounded by urbane diplomats and politicians dazzled by her shrewdness. Because of the ill health of Seward's wife, Kate was in fact, if not in form, the first lady of the Cabinet, and she knew that eventually she could become the unofficial first hostess of the national capital, that she could mesmerize Washington, become the confidante of men engaged in directing the state, be worshiped, admired, envied. But Kate was not satisfied. She and her father had failed. A great, gawky giant from Illinois sat at the head of Cabinet meetings, and a plain, middle-aged woman was the hostess in that unpretentious but most desirable white house that blocked Pennsylvania Avenue. The first state dinner of the Republican administration was a mark of that failure — Abraham Lincoln was the host and her father, her handsome, statesmanlike father, was a guest. In 1864 there would be another test between desire and reality, and she was determined not to fail again.

Chase's position as head of the Treasury offered him a voice in the inner councils of state, as he was learning that night of the state dinner. From that vantage point he meant to outshine President Lincoln as leader of the Republican Party. Although denying that he himself was an abolitionist, Chase was selected by Lincoln to represent in the Cabi-

net the extreme view on the question of slavery. The radicals were well satisfied with their champion, no matter what he might call himself; already they were looking to him as their national spokesman. With the swelling rage of the North, more men would be forced into their camp, and Chase would nourish their regard with the sweet waters of patronage. War usually deals a swift death to those who walk the razor's edge between extremes. Chase did not want war, but he hoped that by 1864 his wing of the Republican Party—the radical wing—would find itself dominant and he who would guard their interests in the coming years would be its chosen leader.

With patronage and prestige assured, Chase had only to find a way to finance his campaign for the Presidency. As he was driven home from the midnight Cabinet meeting at the White House, he had time to reflect on the inadequacy of his carriage. He would soon resolve to get himself a new one.

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CHAPTER II

The Bonds of Friendship

ON THE morning after the state dinner, the Cabinet met, firm with new resolve. In spite of General Scott's recommendations to the contrary, most of Lincoln's advisers, including Chase, now favored provisioning Fort Sumter, regardless of the consequences. Satisfied, Lincoln signed the order for the relief expedition, knowing that he was putting the choice of war or peace squarely up to the South.¹

In a short time Fort Sumter was a smoking ruin; and Washington became a bustling, brawling city, overrun with soldiers. Pennsylvania Avenue was draped with flags, and galloping chargers and commissariat carts drenched the city with choking dust. Washington was indeed the capital of the United States, but it was no longer the scene of beneficent legislation and abstract political argument. The plowshares of logic had been beaten into swords, and Washington was an armed camp. Finding at Bull Run that there was no easy road to Richmond, the government recruited its armies for three years and prepared itself for serious warfare.²

The Chases, too, prepared themselves for the long campaign ahead, a three-year campaign, deadly serious and consequential, of laying siege to politicians and the electorate. In three years the will of the people was expected to send the Chases to the White House. All that the Grand Design lacked was money.

All his life Chase had lived beyond his means; and having long neglected his law practice for politics, he had gone deeply into debt over the years. Kate, who had not earned her education by carrying grain to the mill, developed tastes in New York that were shocking to a niggardly New Englander like her aunt Alice; and when she returned to Ohio as

her father's hostess, she advanced his career with a display matched in munificence only by the strain it put upon a very slender yearly income of eighteen hundred dollars. Bills followed Chase from Ohio to Washington, and he was to find that it would take him seven years after his daughter left Miss Haines's school to pay for her expensive education.³

In Washington, with the White House at last in sight, the Chases could hardly abate their extravagance for a modest, frugal life. They moved into a large, fashionable, three-story brick mansion at Sixth and E streets, Northwest, leased for fifteen hundred dollars a year, a heavy strain on Chase's official salary of eight thousand dollars.⁴ Besides basic expenses — rent, servants, young Nettie's education — there were all the trappings of affluence and power to be paid for, the clothes and carriages, lavish parties and dinners, opulence the Chases felt they had to have, regardless of the cost.

Chase had not been in Washington long before his financial situation became desperate; and as the constricting circle of bills tightened around him, he tried to find a solution that was at once honorable and politically expedient. The Treasury Department seemed an appropriate position for a needy politician, and its coffers might have offered an irresistible temptation had the Secretary's ambitions been financial rather than political. Kate and her father were quick to see the opportunities in their new position — and the dangers. To be caught with his hand in the public till would have meant scandal and ruin, Chase knew, and anyway that naïve manner of filling the only crack in his commanding edifice did not appeal to a man of his conscience. There was always the possibility of arranging a quiet sale of prize Treasury posts; but here, too, was a difficulty. Chase wanted men in his department who would be willing to give him an occasional friendly loan; but in order to remain in command, as he was determined to do, he had to be capable of paying them back.

There were many people who for their own private reasons were eager, in fact anxious, to be of service to Chase, seeing in his situation certain opportunities for mutual benefit. One of these gentlemen was Henry D. Cooke, one of Chase's old political friends from Columbus, who had been editor of the *Ohio State Journal*, an impecunious but in-

fluent newspaper in which Chase had a financial interest.⁵ Cooke was an engaging sort, with a talent for self-expression, but he was as poor a businessman as Chase. Fortunately, he had a brother with money as well as likable manners. This brother, Jay Cooke, was in business in Philadelphia, but willing to mix Ohio politics with private enterprise, he generously kept his brother's newspaper going.

Public-spirited as the Cookes were, they hoped for tangible rewards. Henry D. Cooke came to Washington for Lincoln's inauguration and stayed on through the spring to watch the organization of the administration with almost predatory interest. The father of the two brothers wrote Jay Cooke: "If H.D. don't avail himself of the hard-earned favor of the Administration, he deserves poverty." Jay Cooke in turn wrote his brother impatiently: "I see Chase is in the Treasury — and now what is to be done? . . . Can't you inaugurate something whereby we can all safely make some cash?"⁶

Not to be guilty of undue haste, the Cookes spent the first months of the war ingratiating themselves with Chase and his family. Chase immediately took a liking to Jay Cooke, a hearty, prosperous, God-fearing man, and the Secretary fell into the habit of stopping in Philadelphia at The Cedars, Cooke's great suburban mansion with an arched porch and wide stretches of well-kept lawns. Nettie spent many weeks there, far from the disorder of Washington, before going to private school in the fall of 1861; and Kate found The Cedars a convenient resting place on her many shopping trips to New York City. She had a way of charming her father's friends and associates, and all those social graces so painfully acquired in the bleak loneliness of finishing school were to be put to good use in the years ahead. Jay Cooke was much impressed with her. "She is a glorious girl," he told his brother.⁷

Kate spent the summer getting the Chase mansion ready for her all-important first social season in the national capital. Her taste in all matters involving the household was, as her father would say, "the present law at the corner of 6th and E";⁸ but by October, tormented by his mounting expenses, Chase felt that he had to remind his daughter that she did not have an entirely free hand.

"Before you leave New York you must select a closed carriage; as we

shall need one this winter," he told her. "In making the selection I need hardly caution you to avoid extravagance, as it is going to be hard work to make both ends meet here, and if any circumstances shall compel me to resign before long my expenses will have far exceeded my income." ⁹

When Chase mentioned the matter of the carriage to Jay Cooke, his friend promptly had one delivered to Washington as a gift. As Chase reached out to accept it, his New England conscience and sharp political sense gave him pause. He finally wrote Cooke that he had not determined whether to put the carriage to private or public use. If he decided to keep it himself, he admitted, he was tempted to accept it as a gift. But, he added hastily, "I must not. A public officer while in office must accept no presents beyond those which the ordinary intercourse of society prompts and allows from friend to friend." ¹⁰

By then Chase was growing vexed with the meager rewards of public office. Behind him was a record of distinguished public service. Now one of the most powerful men in the country, he was convinced that he was a man marked by Providence for the highest office in the land; and yet day after day, in his Treasury office, in his home, at Cabinet meetings and at state functions, he was continually nagged by the insolent problem of money. It was not a limitation to which a man like Chase could adjust himself. He could not stint when the future promised him the reputation he knew he rightly deserved. Daily he walked in the shadow of the White House.

Bitterness welled up in his heart, and he told Kate peevishly, "It does seem a little hard that we who have so much important work to do as I have had the last twelve years should all the time have had to pay so large a part of [our] own expense." His resentment chafed his conscience until it began to form a callus. A month after he wrote Jay Cooke those high-minded words about the duties of a public officer, an almost imperceptible change came over him. He had saved himself from temptation in the case of the carriage by deciding it was too light for his purposes and, therefore, had to be returned to the carriage maker; but he was no longer averse to accepting personal favors, if they were extended with tactful discretion. In his letter informing the banker of his final decision on the carriage, Chase said, "I had come to the

conclusion to allow Katie to accept it as the gift of yourself and Mr. Moorhead [Cooke's partner]. . . ." ¹¹

Discerning Jay Cooke was quick to catch the new tone in Chase's words, and he fell in gladly with the change of spirit, seeing in it an immensely valuable way to serve his new friends and thereby himself. For the time being, he would confine his generosity to small gifts, mostly furnishings for the Chase home in Washington. Kate had ordered some bookshelves while in Philadelphia, and when they were ready, Jay Cooke sent them on to her as a gift. Kate chided him gently, saying that she would have to be "very careful" in the future "how I leave orders at your house," but the bookshelves remained in the Chase mansion at Sixth and E streets. ¹²

With Chase's admission into the Cabinet, he found his familiar personal problem suddenly elevated to a public responsibility, for now in addition to keeping the wolf from his own door he had to keep the government solvent. Unfortunately, an imposing Treasury Building did not symbolize a full treasury any more than brilliant parades meant a strong army. When Chase took over the department, he found a startling deficit, impaired credit, and revenue enough to meet only a fraction of the cost of war. Chase's problems were without precedent; but even though he was without experience in public finance and although his own private financial background was not one to inspire confidence, he was not overcome by his difficulties. With his firm reputation for purity, his optimism, and his friends, he had no doubts about his ability to deal with affairs he did not understand. Predicting a sixty-day war that could be financed by modest loans, he set about on what he considered his primary and broader duties of supervising the entire Lincoln administration. ¹³ But by the summer of 1861, sixty days had come and gone, Richmond was far from being occupied by Federal troops, and the war was costing a million dollars a day. Chase, his confidence faltering, turned his attention back to the Treasury Department. When optimism failed, Chase's friends, the Cookes in particular, rushed to the rescue.

That benevolent old fox Jay Cooke looked upon his personal favors to the Chases as sound capital outlay. Once he gained Chase's friend-

ship, he prepared the way for collecting his returns by urging his philosophy of finance on the inexperienced Secretary of the Treasury, advising him ". . . not to try too much to save the pennies but to keep on the right side of those capitalists who are disposed to dabble in the loans, etc., of the government, and if they do make sometimes a handsome margin it is no more than they are entitled to in such times as these." ¹⁴ With no idea of the agonies that war would bring the country, Jay Cooke did not feel it unpatriotic or unchristian to show concern for the welfare of dabbling capitalists. He meant to be one of them when the time was right.

Growing bolder, he began to make specific suggestions about how Chase could run the department. Chase took the sting out of his rejections by offering Jay Cooke a Treasury position. At the same time Henry D. Cooke wrote his brother: "We are just beginning to get 'inside the ring' and there are several 'good things' in prospect which a little management and patience will bring out all right." Encouraged, Jay Cooke politely rejected the minor Treasury post and countered by offering to establish a bank in Washington to aid the Treasury. He smoothly suggested that the Secretary ease himself from his taxing burdens by turning over to this new establishment the management of all loans to be issued by the government during the war, subject, of course, to Chase's supervision. ¹⁵

Mr. Cooke's attitude was a little pushing. His banking house was only six months old and almost completely unknown outside of Philadelphia when he offered to take over the duties of the Secretary of the Treasury. Much as Chase enjoyed his visits to The Cedars, he knew that Mr. Cooke's home was but a convenient way station between Washington and New York, where the long-established and most important financial firms had their offices. Chase sent his friend a polite rebuff, and the two men settled back for a short intermission during which they eyed each other appraisingly. Neither thought that their relationship had reached a permanent stalemate.

For a time Kate had to be content to leave the details of finance, both public and private, to her father and his friends; for the tempo of her

social life began to increase as the cool weather of October brought back Washingtonians who had fled to the North during the hot, stifling summer. The house at Sixth and E entertained legions of callers — business associates, military men, endless crowds of government officials, and visiting Ohioans, curious about their former governor's new eminence. Kate took command of the servants, planned her father's receptions and dinners, and presided over them with matchless grace. Often she began her day as hostess at one of her father's breakfast parties; tirelessly she attended afternoon receptions and exchanged cards, visited the House or Senate to hear an important debate, kept appointments with her dressmaker, rode out in the country to call upon a general at his headquarters in the field, went horseback riding in the wilderness of Rock Creek Park. In the evening, she would have her maid help her into an evening gown, and radiant and vivacious still, she would take the arm of her father as they set out for dinner and the theater or a ball or another reception. Kate was always beautiful and, to the right people, always charming; and she was the center of attention wherever she went.

In February, 1862, one of the leading journals of the North, reporting on a brilliant White House party, commented: "La belle des belles was Miss Kate Chase. . . ." ¹⁶ Kate had not always been mentioned in society columns earlier that season, but in the future her name would not often be omitted.

Mrs. Lincoln resentfully watched Kate set up rival court in her own house. By the winter of 1862, the mutual dislike of the two was no state secret. A troubled, deeply disturbed woman, Mrs. Lincoln had an unreasoning fear of all attractive women; but her hatred for Kate Chase was not entirely unfounded. She was right in thinking that Kate was a special enemy who meant to steal not only the attention and deference that rightfully belonged to the First Lady, but to rob her of her last refuge — her position. Kate openly expressed her contempt for Mrs. Lincoln and, refusing to recognize her position as head of official society, tried to usurp that place for herself. Before long *she* would be mistress of the White House, she told her friends confidently. ¹⁷

Lincoln good-naturedly chided his wife about her jealousy of the ar-

rogant young girl. Before one White House reception he said to her, "Well, mother, who must I talk with tonight — shall it be Mrs. D[ouglas]?" (Adele Cutts Douglas was the beautiful and much-envied widow of Stephen A. Douglas.)

Mrs. Lincoln replied angrily, "That deceitful woman! No, you shall not listen to her flattery."

"Well, then, what do you say to Miss C[hase]? She is too young and handsome to practise deceit."

"Young and handsome, you call her! You should not judge beauty for me. No, she is in league with Mrs. D[ouglas], and you shall not talk with her."

"Well, mother, I must talk with someone. Is there anyone that you do not object to?" asked Lincoln with mock gravity as he buttoned his gloves.

"I don't know as it is necessary that you should talk to anybody in particular. You know well enough, Mr. Lincoln, that I do not approve of your flirtations with silly women, just as if you were a beardless boy, fresh from school."

"But, mother, I insist that I must talk with somebody. I can't stand around like a simpleton, and say nothing. If you will not tell me who I may talk with, please tell me who I may not talk with."

"There is Mrs. D[ouglas] and Miss C[hase] in particular," answered his wife with asperity. "I detest them both. . . ." ¹⁸

Mrs. Lincoln might have been surprised to learn that young, beautiful Kate Chase envied her. White House parties galled Kate and made her bitterly discontented, for there she saw most clearly her own limitations. Like Kate, Mrs. Lincoln had been busy during the previous spring and summer redecorating her home; but while Kate shopped at A. T. Stewart's store in New York, Mrs. Lincoln was sending an interior decorator to Paris to select her furnishings. Even the First Lady was not entirely free from the bonds of a budget; but Kate Chase, unaware of her financial limitations, saw only the splendors of the refurbished Executive Mansion and the sumptuous feast that the caterer Maillard provided for the February party—five hundred gallons of champagne, nearly a ton of venison, turkey, duck, pheasant, and ham,

and breath-taking confectionery masterpieces.¹⁹ When Mrs. Lincoln could call upon the resources of the Marine Band and Maillard to distinguish her parties, how could Kate rival her? One party like Mrs. Lincoln's would have cost almost as much as her father earned in a year.

Mrs. Lincoln's lustrous white décolleté gown and pearls added to Kate's unhappiness. The press would praise Miss Chase's voluptuous eyes, her entangling smile, and tall, slender figure; but her gowns would be judged simple, and there would be no mention of her jewels. For a time Kate had to be satisfied with providing a spectacular contrast to the rich gilt that ladies wore at Washington balls,²⁰ but she was not the ingénue she appeared in her plain gowns of white lawn. As she saw the imported silks, the cameos and diamonds, she grew increasingly impatient with the flowers in her own hair; and she suspected that before long the novelty of simplicity would wear off and Washington society and Northern reporters would turn their attention back to the established leaders of society.

The party that marked Kate's new prominence in society was Mary Lincoln's last big social affair for many months. Two weeks afterward her young son Willie died of typhoid fever, and later, when Mrs. Lincoln resumed her social duties, she did so with a heavy heart. Almost three years after Willie's death, she told a friend, "The world has lost so much of its charm. My position, requires my presence, where my heart, is so *far* from being."²¹ Never again would Mrs. Lincoln attempt to set the social pattern of Washington. Her social aspirations died with her son; and Kate's unpopular rival, beset by sorrow, resentment, and strange fears, gradually faded into an embittered obscurity.

A few months after the White House party, an Ohioan named James Garfield arrived in Washington and wrote home about Kate: "She has probably more social influence and makes a better impression generally than any other Cabinet lady. This is the transition between the old slaveholding aristocratic social dynasty and the new Republican one. Indeed it is the absence of any, the interregnum. . . ."²² Kate knew that she could take her place on the vacant throne, if she had enough money.

By the winter of 1862, Chase had found that public office and virtue did not pay as well as stocks and bonds. He was making financial policy, but Jay Cooke was making money. In the preceding months their friendship had matured and was paying dividends. Henry Cooke now came and went in Chase's office and home like a trusted assistant; and gloating over the advantages bestowed on Cooke and Company over their competitors, he told his brother happily, ". . . don't worry about others getting ahead of us." Henry Cooke had access to secret information, such as advance notice of military movements, which had a telling effect on the stock exchange. This information was telegraphed on to his brother in Philadelphia for his action; and when a strict censorship was imposed on the telegraph, the Cookes arranged an ingenious code to slip messages by the censors and the prying eyes of rivals. When Jay Cooke finally carried out his plans to establish a branch of his firm in Washington, Salmon P. Chase, private citizen, was one of the first depositors.²³ The partners must have been cheered by his show of confidence; for if he trusted them with his meager private funds, he might be willing to trust them with some of the vast resources of the Treasury.

Jay Cooke had done much to win Chase's trust by his spectacular success as a temporary Treasury agent in selling government notes. Organizing a vigorous publicity campaign, he sold them to the man in the street rather than wealthy financiers, thereby sparking a revolution in public finance. Cooke's stride toward democratic war financing showed Salmon P. Chase that by depending on a great mass of people, he and the administration would be released from the strangle hold of bankers, who, when they made a loan to the government, thought they had purchased the right to take an uncommonly active part in the management of the war and the Treasury Department.²⁴ Equally important for Jay Cooke was the fact that he had proved his ability to Chase, who thereafter was expected to be less wary about putting their relationship on some firm business footing.

The first step came when Chase decided that he could no longer afford the luxury of a fastidious conscience. He would have to accept favors from Jay Cooke; in fact, he would have to solicit them. In Feb-

ruary, 1862, two days after Mrs. Lincoln's party, he sat down at his desk to write his friend, asking for a loan of two thousand dollars. Still Chase could not quite bring himself to ask for money for himself. This favor, like the coupé, was to be considered a favor for Kate. Jay Cooke sent a draft to Chase by return mail. Chase promptly repaid the loan a month later and in the same letter thoughtfully enclosed Cooke's appointment as loan agent, a commission for him to sell a new issue of bonds.²⁵ At last Jay Cooke was inside the ring! The appointment was just the kind of good thing he had been awaiting.

Along with the appointment came another personal request: "How can you invest a few thousand dollars for me so as to make the best profit?" The Secretary may have been uncomfortable about coupling the appointment with a request for a favor, but he could mollify his conscience with the thought that it was, after all, a favor, not an outright gift, that he wanted. However convincing his arguments were to himself, he did not want to have to use them on the public or Congress. He added nervously: "Please in your correspondence keep public and private matters entirely distinct. I wish to file every letter relating to our agency of the government and want the correspondence to present a clear and concise idea of all transactions."²⁶

In a letter boldly marked "private," Jay Cooke replied charitably: "I will take great pains to lay aside occasionally some choice 'tid bits' managing the investments for you and not bothering your head with them, other than once in six months. I hope to make up the deficiency in your account current of salary and actual expenses for it is a shame that you should go 'behind hand' working as you do. . . . My use of the balance you deposited in the J[ay] C[ooke] & Co need not interfere with your drawing on it as you may have occasion." Aware that New York bankers were jealous of his friendship with Chase, Cooke had his own reasons for caution in entering into this new relationship with the Secretary; but, being a man of religious principles, he was somewhat offended by Chase's conspiratorial tone. To Chase's nervous admonitions about the distinction between private and public affairs, he replied stiffly: "I believe I never yet made a transaction that I should not like the public to see and trust that the record may always

remain clear—for *your* sake as well as mine.” He added, however, that he would “hereafter avoid mixing up private with public matters.”²⁷

Chase concurred wholeheartedly with the righteous hope that the record, if public, would always remain clear; but this would not be the last instance when he as Secretary of the Treasury would prefer certain of his activities to remain private.

Jay Cooke was an obliging and in some respects a very discreet man; but occasionally he made a slip. Chase frequently had to caution his friend to conform to the forms of the department and plead with him to watch the strict divorce between private and public business in his letters “so that there can be nothing on which to hang an accusation or an excuse for investigation committees. . . .”²⁸ But the Secretary soon discovered that the profits he was making from the choice tidbits Cooke laid aside for him were worth some discomfort. By the end of April, 1862, the banker had run Chase’s thirteen thousand dollars, which had actually been a loan, up to fifteen thousand, a handsome return for a five weeks’ investment. A month later Cooke wrote of another profit of over a thousand dollars on another investment and included the happy news that he had put five thousand dollars for Chase in railroad stock that was expected to bring a return of three to four hundred per cent.²⁹

Except for keeping a wary eye on congressional investigating committees, Chase was not troubled by the singular manner in which Jay Cooke was making up his deficit. Cooke lent him capital, made the investments for him, within a few weeks reported a large return, and sent him a check. Chase did not appear even mildly curious to find out whether or not this ritual was a genteel fiction to disguise periodic gifts. Whenever he heard about Cooke’s profitable ventures, his curiosity was overpowered by joy. “It gave me great pleasure to see the prompt manner in which you secured the control of the Washington Railway,” he wrote Jay Cooke. “I hope you realize all the benefits you expected from it. I told Henry D. [Cooke] that I was strongly inclined to resign as Secretary of the Treasury to take the office of President of the Company, but will, I believe, hold out where I am till I see my

whole scheme of finance realized if it is to be realized at all. . . . I wish I could get all my little property into production form and my debts paid. I should then feel quite independent.”³⁰

Jay Cooke had no reason for alarm over Chase’s heretical suggestion that he might resign to become a businessman. He had heard this feeble threat before. In the first months of the war, when Chase was struggling to raise money from tight-fisted bankers and an ungenerous public, he had written Jay Cooke petulantly that if steps were not taken to secure his policies, he would have to “cast off the responsibility and go into your firm.”³¹ The suggestion was gratuitous, to say the least. It was improbable that the idea had ever occurred to the Cookes. Actually, it behooved both men to keep Chase’s participation in the firm on its existing unofficial basis. With the Secretary of the Treasury as a kind of silent partner, Jay Cooke could look for many happy returns on his investments; and Chase knew that his political, if not his financial, interests lay with the Treasury, with its vast potentialities for establishing a loyal and powerful political machine. He did not want to become a millionaire. He wanted to be President.

Cooke was not much more concerned about Chase’s wistful hopes for independence. He knew that Chase’s current rate of expenses would require him to depend upon such help as he could provide unless, of course, Chase sought a more drastic solution. The Secretary could, and occasionally would, call upon his appointees to lend him some cash,³² but those other resources of the Secretary of the Treasury would exact a heavy political price. Jay Cooke was content with his situation.

In June, consumed with self-pity, Chase wrote him: “My public duties for the last thirteen years have left me no time for attention to my private affairs, while my expenses above my income . . . have reduced my property to a quarter or a half its value. I cannot afford to go farther in the same direction.”³³ Nor could Chase risk going much farther in the direction he had chosen to solve his problem. He knew what risks his clandestine intimacy with the Cooke firm entailed. He had come into the Treasury with one chief asset—his reputation for integrity—which would be as useful to a presidential aspirant in 1864 as

it was to a Cabinet member in 1861. Financial exigencies had made him mortgage his conscience, but Chase did not mean to compromise his ambition. The ultimate solution would have to rest in someone else's hands, perhaps in Kate's.

CHAPTER III

The Knight of Rhode Island

KATE CHASE had first met William Sprague in the fall of 1860 when he had ridden into Cleveland at the head of an elite Rhode Island regiment to take part in an official ceremony. Kate, watching the parade, had been curious about the spectacular figure on horseback.

"Who is that?" she had asked, nodding toward Sprague.

"The young governor of Rhode Island," she was told.

That night at a ball, an old friend of the Chases introduced Sprague to Kate, and it was obvious that the governor was intrigued. "He and Kate went off together," the friend recalled later, "and for the rest of the evening whenever we saw one of them we were pretty sure to see the other."¹

Seven months later Kate saw Sprague triumphantly march his troops to the rescue of Washington. For days after the fall of Fort Sumter the capital had shivered under the threat of the Southern cavalry. Washington was a precarious quadrangle in an alien land, fettered to Virginia by its bridges, its railroad running through Maryland, which swayed dangerously on the edge of secession. But with the arrival of Sprague and his brilliant First Rhode Island Regiment it seemed to even the most timorous that the phantom siege of the city was at an end, that Washington was safe in the strong arms of the giant of the North. The streets were lined with frenzied, cheering crowds giving voice to relief and hope as the city joyously took the "Boy Governor" of Rhode Island to its heart. President Lincoln personally welcomed Sprague and his men to the city and publicly praised the governor's patriotism.²

Even before the President had issued his emergency call for volun-

teers, Sprague had hastened to offer the services of his state's light artillery and a regiment of infantry. The first Democratic governor to support the new Republican administration, he had stirred and heartened Northerners everywhere by his display of political unity in the grave crisis. And, not content with mere gestures of patriotism, he had offered his state a loan of one hundred thousand dollars to outfit the troops, and he himself had provided the necessary horses.³ At a time when hesitation could have meant the difference between life and death, Sprague had acted boldly and surely. He was indeed the man of the hour, and much would be expected of him when the fighting began.

The people of the capital soon grew fond of the familiar swash-buckling figure galloping about the city and turning and wheeling before his troops as they marched in review down the boulevards of Washington. Sprague was very young, having been a few months under the required age of thirty when elected governor of Rhode Island the year before. He had boyish good looks—brown wavy hair, stone-colored eyes, and a small silken mustache which did not add as many years to his appearance as he would have liked. Upon seeing him for the first time, one Washington politician had commented disparagingly that he was a "small, spare young man . . . who wears glasses, and stoops in the shoulders. . . ." The description would have suited Sprague until that spring of 1861. He was a slight man, only five feet six inches tall; but his military bearing, his uniform, and favorite yellow-plumed hat seemed to add to his stature. No longer would his enemies say that he could pass for a bank clerk or a divinity student. Marching at the head of the exclusive Rhode Island First, he was every inch a hero.⁴

The young man was flattered to discover that, of all the officers converging upon the capital, Kate Chase, the belle of the city, was most interested in him. She was concerned about his comfort in his military camp in the Patent Office and seemed prettily impressed with his artillery battery, knowing that he had bought its ninety-six horses out of his own purse. It was clear that Kate thought Sprague cut a dashing figure, but possibly the figure that interested her most was the twenty-

five million dollars he was reputed to be worth. It was said later that, upon first seeing him in Ohio, she had asked, "Is he wealthy?"

The answer had been emphatic. "One of the wealthiest men in America."⁵

The crotchety old commander of the army, General Winfield Scott, held the unromantic notion that war was mud, blood, and dysentery and was sometimes annoyed at Sprague's extramartial activities centering upon the daughter of the Secretary of the Treasury, but he found it difficult to discipline the governor of even the smallest state. The spring of 1861 was a time for military reviews, band concerts, and flirtations; and a gout-ridden old general could only shrug his shoulders philosophically and accept defeat.⁶

"People were awakened by the reveille, walked with measured tread during the day, and were lulled by the tattoo at night," observed one resident. "All seemed more like a grand gala season than a serious work of war." Discipline among the Thursday-night soldiers was almost nonexistent. Civilians were distracted by accidental shootings and drunken brawls. Respectable ladies, retreating to their parlors, peered out upon the intriguing havoc of the streets. Sanitary conditions became appalling, and in the heat of early summer the city stank with a penetrating, acrid smell. Everyone was eager to march in parades, but there were few volunteers to dig latrines, burn rubbish, and clean up the camps in the city. Drudgery seemed beyond the call of duty.⁷

During those chaotic days of adjustment, the Rhode Island troops and their officers appeared to be models of discipline and self-reliance. When their commander, Colonel Ambrose P. Burnside, was instructed to requisition supplies for his men, he replied loftily, "We need nothing, Sir, from the government; Rhode Island and her governor will attend to their wants." Standing smartly at parade rest, the Rhode Island First looked like newly minted tin soldiers in their dress uniforms — gray pants, dark-blue flannel shirts with scarlet blanket rolls slung over their shoulders, and soft hats stylishly rolled up at one side. The regiment was Sprague's pride. In addition to mechanics and tradesmen it consisted of some of the wealthiest men in Rhode Island; in fact, it was called the "million dollar regiment."⁸

When the Rhode Island troops were mustered in, they moved out to camp on a high ridge north of the Capitol, near Glenwood Cemetery. John Hay, Lincoln's young secretary, who had recently graduated from Brown University in Providence, visited the "Rhodian heroes" in their pastoral setting and fatuously exclaimed, "Scattered through the rubbish and camp-litter . . . there was enough of breeding and honor to retone the society of the Gulf and wealth enough to purchase the entire state of Florida. . . . When men like these leave their horses, their women and their wine, harden their hands, eat crackers for dinner, wear a shirt for a week and never black their shoes—all for a principle—it is hard to set any bounds to the possibilities of such an army. The good blood of the North must now be mingled with that of the South in battle and the first fight will determine which is redder."⁹

Late in the spring, William Sprague left the heady excitement of the capital and returned to his desk in Providence to organize another infantry regiment. But he was not happy there. For years he had been fascinated by soldiers and armies, by the pageantry—the colorful uniforms and fashionable regiments—and the strong virility of sweating, marching men. In the Rhode Island militia during the 1850's, pageantry had overshadowed violence, and William Sprague had been the flamboyant colonel who bought Zouave uniforms for his artillery and pranced at the head of the columns in full-dress uniform and a hat with a preposterous yellow plume. The militia had worked a miraculous alchemy on Sprague, usually quiet and uncomfortable in society. Tin was changed to gold; the thin, stoop-shouldered lad became a man. His epaulettes swelled the span of his shoulders; the saddle lifted him high above the ground; the saber at his side reassured him. Outside of his business, the militia was his life.

When Sprague arrived in Washington with his men, John Hay wrote in his diary: "I called on Sprague, the Gov. of R. I. . . . a small insignificant youth, who bought his place. But he is certainly all right now. He is proud of his company, of its wealth and social standing."¹⁰ Hay was only partially right. Sprague was proud of his regiment, but he was not quite satisfied with himself. The symbolic drama that he had been playing for years was reaching a climax. Before long the

drills and parades would be discarded for battle, and he was obsessed with the thought that then and only then would the real heroes emerge. Sprague wanted to be one of them.

He had been away from Washington only a few days when he wrote the Secretary of War suggesting that he be commissioned to serve officially with the Rhode Island troops. He declared stoutly that he himself "would as freely shoulder a musket as carry a sword," but in view of other considerations he asked that, if given official rank, he be commissioned a major general. The people of Rhode Island would not approve of his accepting less, he said. Neither did he think they would approve of his resigning the governorship because of his commission.¹¹

The administration would have liked to oblige the Boy Governor for being among the first to come to the aid of the Union, but political considerations interfered. The available commission went to Democrat Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts, the fat, squint-eyed little man who had brought his troops into the capital on the same train that had brought Sprague. Both politicians were the very models of modern major generals, with Sprague having a possible edge in knowing which was the business end of a musket; but Butler had the decisive political advantage of coming from Massachusetts, a larger and more heavily populated state than Rhode Island.¹²

The Secretary of War tried to extricate himself from his embarrassment by offering Sprague a commission as brigadier general. Stung with disappointment, Sprague rejected the proposal coolly; but, allowing himself a small indulgence to ease his feelings, he had painted a full-length portrait of himself as "His Excellency, General William Sprague, Governor of Rhode Island, First Volunteer of the War." It was a handsome portrait done in the classical style against a background of graceful drapery and a fluted column. Sprague stood with one arm bent, his thumb in his belt; in his other hand he held a scroll of paper. At his side was a saber. William Sprague, soldier and statesman: a lithe young man, bearing his golden epaulettes manfully, his expression fixed and impassive, his mustache a long oblique shadow across his face, his youth betrayed by his eyes, and the high clear forehead marked by a widow's peak of straight black hair. There was an air of unreality

about the portrait. It was an abstraction, an idealization — William Sprague's dream about himself.¹³

In mid-July word reached Providence that political pressure was forcing General McDowell to move Union forces against the Confederate army stationed but a day's march from the capital at Centreville and Manassas Junction, astride the logical route for the Northern march on Richmond. William Sprague hurried to join the army, knowing full well that without a commission he was unprotected by the laws of war. Even though he was not a major general, he had not lost his taste for war. War was offering him an opportunity that money had always denied him — an opportunity to wring distinction from his own valor.

As the young man pressed deeper into enemy territory, curiosity and a thriftless courage took hold of him. "I wanted to feel the enemy; I wanted to see him," Sprague explained.¹⁴ Leaving the Rhode Island troops in camp, he galloped south with Tyler's division on a reconnaissance mission; but at Blackburn Ford the advance was stopped by murderous Confederate fire. The division retreated in disorder, but William Sprague escaped without injury.

The big battle took place three days later. The Rhode Island troops, two infantry regiments and an artillery battery, had been selected to take part in the crucial maneuver of outflanking the Confederates' left, deployed along Bull Run. The flanking movement, which was to have started early in the morning, was delayed; and by the time the men crossed Cub Run, the Confederates had moved a large detachment of troops upstream to meet them. Burnside's brigade, with the Second Rhode Island Regiment in the fore, met the enemy late in the morning. Years later the memory of those desperate hours was vivid in Sprague's mind: ". . . we felt the enemy; we came upon him posted not forty paces from us. . . . the battle went on; we had no time to look behind.

"I took special charge of the [artillery] battery. The men, detached and separated, were a little confused; some stood firm. Horses were struck down; men laid down and died; for ten minutes I supplied the guns with cartridges and ammunition to give confidence to the line. I kept my horse during the fight; the bullets scratched me and made holes in my loose blouse."¹⁵

The vigorous fighting of the Rhode Island Second and the artillery battery stopped the Confederates' counterattack. The Union line was hard pressed, however; but for forty minutes no help came. Then finally the First Rhode Island Regiment poured out of the woods at the rear to join its comrades. To Sprague it seemed that he was the only man in command. ". . . I shall never forget . . . the blast of the enthusiasm with which those twelve hundred men received me. We were ripe then for a charge. I led. . . my horse was then shot. I took off his saddle in front of the line; and the men, without order . . . fell back."¹⁶

During a lull, Burnside's exhausted brigade was relieved and marched to the rear, but Sprague stayed on at the front with the Rhode Island artillery. The success of the battle hinged upon McDowell's plan to keep General J. E. Johnston bottled up in the Shenandoah Valley at Winchester, but the Confederate general slipped away from the Union army opposing him and hurried to join the beleaguered army of General Beauregard.

"I received the full blast of Johnston's reinforcement, not twenty paces off," recalled Sprague. "I saw the men scattered; they were not held to the line."¹⁷

Sprague rushed back to the hidden regiments to urge them to guard the rear of the Union army, but he was too late. The boulevard soldiers were ill prepared for the fog of battle. Fear thundered through the ranks, and the Union army was routed. Within a few minutes the road near Stone Bridge was a chaos of swearing drivers, stalled carts, and sweating men screaming, "Turn back. Turn back. We are whipped!" Whole regiments were believed to have been destroyed, and the Southern cavalry was expected to ride out of the woods at any moment to put an end to the rest of the army.

The crazed army was swept back toward its camp at Centreville. There, where the terrain provided a natural line of defense, Sprague hoped the army would turn to meet the enemy. He sent Burnside to the conference of generals at Centreville to tell them to "fortify our position; that we should not go back like sheep to Washington; that we should not be further disgraced." Sprague was too tired to go himself. He was a frail man, even in uniform; and the sustained madness

of the battle had exhausted him. Throwing himself on his cot, he fell into a deep sleep. At two A.M. he awoke to find the bright moon half shrouded by clouds. The camp was inhabited by shadows. Everyone had continued the rout to Washington, and in the panic William Sprague had been forgotten.¹⁸

All that night the Union troops moved back across Virginia through country silent as death. They dipped into valleys that were ebony lakes beneath the shadows of the trees, then mounted again to the silver road, shining like the Potomac in the moonlight. Pursued by echoes, the vanguard clattered across Long Bridge and was engulfed in the blazing lights of the wakeful city, its streets crowded with people wanting to know details of the fight. Washington became hushed as it watched the steady line of sodden, exhausted soldiers come on through the early-morning drizzle that fell noiselessly on the muddy streets. At about 10:30 the First Regiment of Rhode Island arrived with only about one half their numbers in the line, their equipment lost and uniforms filthy. This time their arrival in Washington was greeted by no cheering thousands or brilliant parades or joyful acclaim for their soldierly appearance. William Sprague rode into town after his troops and retired immediately to Willard's Hotel. It was reported that he was prostrate with fatigue.¹⁹

The first great battle of the war was over. Looking at the shocked city, chilled again by the threat of immediate attack, one observer wrote sadly in his diary: "The American people, its institutions, the Union — all have lost their virginity, their political innocence. A revolution in the institutions, in the mode of life, in notions begun, it is going on, will grow and mature, either for good or evil. Civil war, this most terrible but most maturing passion has put an end to the boyhood and to the youth of the American people. . . . A new generation of citizens will grow and come out from this smoke of Civil War."²⁰

In Rhode Island William Sprague endured the mockeries of public ovations and triumphant boulevard reviews. He had returned home with honor but not with peace of mind. Reporters composed praises of the little fighting governor and his Rhode Island regiments, but

Sprague knew that the test of his pride at Bull Run had been a disaster. At the critical moment before the battle the sartorial Rhode Island First, the men he had led to the rescue of the capital, had refused to move, insisting that their three months' enlistment had run out and that they wanted to go home. Only Sprague's threats to disgrace them before the country had kept them in the line, he was sure. Later, during the hot, confusing fight with the Confederates, he had raged at their slowness in coming to the aid of the Second Regiment and at their panic during the rout. He blamed them and Colonel Burnside for the defeat of the entire Union army and was furious when, leaving the capital to the mercies of the Southern cavalry, the regiment shamelessly sped homeward and promptly disbanded, refusing to give heed to the War Department's frantic pleas for re-enlistment. This, then, was the regiment Sprague had prepared for battle. Besides money, he had freely endowed these men with his pride and hope; but the only tangible return on his outlay was an honorary degree of master of arts from Brown University and an ornamental piece of artillery, the lone surviving cannon rescued from the field of Bull Run, presented to him in token gratitude by the Rhode Island Assembly.²¹

The Federal army had lost a battle, and William Sprague had lost a dream. Gone was the buoyant optimism that had borne him triumphant from Providence to Washington. At thirty-one William Sprague could boast of being the youngest, richest governor of the Union's smallest state, but he was not what he wanted to be. The men who had followed him joyfully along the streets of the capital had not been willing to follow him in battle. He had been courageous in the impartial hail of enemy fire, but somehow he had failed. All the doubts about himself that had raged in his heart for many years returned with a rush. Perhaps he could never redeem himself; perhaps he would always remain "a small insignificant youth, who bought his place."

To prove himself, to retrieve his pride, Sprague returned to war, turning up at the skirmish at Bolivar Heights near Harper's Ferry in the fall of 1861, another Union defeat that gave him no opportunity to distinguish himself. He returned to his desk to watch enviously the

brilliant military success of another young man only four years older than he, a young man who had the flair for leadership that eluded him. George B. McClellan had come to Washington from his victories in western Virginia to save the capital from invasion. Like Sprague, he was a small man with a ragged mustache and a penchant for brilliant uniforms; but, unlike the Boy Governor, McClellan had broad shoulders, a genius for organization, and command of the Army of the Potomac. The entire North watched in admiration as he worked to bring order out of chaos. Forts, redoubts, and batteries were thrown up to protect Washington, and drills and discipline fused the new, raw recruits into a hard fighting body. But as General McClellan's stationary army grew visibly stronger and better equipped, it became increasingly apparent that he was willing to dissipate his energies in drill. Winter brought the chilling thought that McClellan's bustle and dash were, after all, a kind of paralysis.²²

The President's impatience and a Confederate withdrawal finally prodded McClellan into moving his army down Chesapeake Bay to Fortress Monroe to begin his advance upon Richmond by way of the peninsula formed by the York and James rivers. In May, 1862, when a battle was at last in the offing, William Sprague hastened from Providence to join the army with an assimilated rank of brigadier general. He led no troops, but he managed to be in the thick of the battle. Official dispatches listed him as one of the advance scouts of the army, and General "Fighting Joe" Hooker mentioned his services with appreciation. Sprague himself gave an imaginative report of his experiences to Congress. "I found the dead that we were obliged to leave on the battlefield with their faces downward as a mark of indignity," he said. "I found the heads of my bravest and best companions severed from their bodies to be used as drinking cups by southern rebels."²³

Unfortunately, McClellan chose to woo Richmond too slowly, and William Sprague had to return to his civic duties in the North without overseeing victory. General Robert E. Lee, now in command of the Confederate army, had time to rush reinforcements from the Southern coast and secretly bring Jackson's army from the Shenandoah Valley. In a week of savage fighting, the magnificently trained army of Mc-

Clellan was driven back from its lines within sight of the church spires of Richmond to a tight pocket on the James River. Richmond was saved, and victory once again lay with the South. Another Union crusade into Virginia had suffered a bloody death.

While Richmond rejoiced, Washington felt the oppression of summer heat and discouragement. After more than a year of war, the largest Federal army had yet to win its first victory and was in fact threatened with annihilation. William Sprague had a plan to save it, and the day after the dispirited North observed Independence Day, he sat down to write a letter of advice to President Lincoln. He began crisply: "Sir, I would rather storm a battery than force my opinions on you.

"The critical condition of the republic emboldens me. It is in far greater jeopardy than any previous time during the rebellion." Only by concentrating the armies of the North on the Confederate capital could Lincoln save the situation, said Sprague. The crux of his plan was to have General Halleck's army sweep northward from Tennessee and Mississippi in a week or ten days to "unsnaarl the snarl" in which McClellan found himself. Sprague himself volunteered to go to Halleck to persuade him that "reason and the public safety demand his quickest possible action."²⁴

That July the future of the Army of the Potomac did not look very bright; but, for that matter, neither did Sprague's proposal. The President did not want to do anything to endanger Halleck's campaign in the West, but he chose the charitable course of sending Sprague to the general's headquarters, knowing that he could depend on "Old Brains" Halleck to turn his plan down. Lincoln was aware that often the better part of political wisdom is to treat harebrained schemes politely. Sprague was serving his third term as governor, but he was, thanks to the state legislature, Senator-elect from Rhode Island, soon to take a seat in the body that frequently showed as much fight toward Lincoln as toward the South. The President could always use another ally in the Senate, especially when his armies were suffering defeats.²⁵

The trip to Corinth was a turning point in the life of William Sprague. When he returned North, he packed away forever his orna-

mental uniform, his musket, and his sword. Sixteen months before, he had suddenly found himself a military leader and national hero. Trying desperately to live up to the legend, he had plunged headlong into battle. He had been courageous, but defeated. Sprague was a man of quick gestures, of sudden passions and rash deeds; but even though he had no taste for patience, he might have gone on fighting if he had felt that he had received proper gratitude for his service. But he had ridden back from the horrors of Bull Run to find that he was to have no badge for his courage. Commissions were squandered on more powerful politicians than he, and no one would inquire first where they had been on the bloody Sunday in late July. The fickle public fawned on other men, men he thought less swift, energetic, and bold in their support of the Union, and Sprague was all but forgotten. For a few months he had gone on doggedly accompanying the army into battle, but he found that there was little glory in being an unofficial scout, even though he rode out ahead of the army by himself in daring forays.

Lacking that fugitive quality of command, Sprague turned his talents to high strategy. Finding that staff officers listened absently to his words and then went ahead with their own plans, he began to pester the President with his blueprints for victory. Counterattack the rebels immediately, he urged Lincoln after Bull Run. Bring Halleck from the West, he demanded after the disaster on the peninsula. The President always heard him out, but ignored his advice. At Corinth, even with Lincoln's careful letter of introduction, Sprague failed again.²⁶ Corinth was his last gesture, but scarcely anyone noticed that the enlistment of the first volunteer of the war had finally run out.

With great reluctance General Sprague became Statesman Sprague, concerned with a problem as vast and complicated and laden with danger as soldiering — getting cotton for his New England mills.

On New Year's Eve eighteen years earlier, his father Amasa Sprague had been walking along a snow-covered road near Providence when suddenly, somewhere out of the darkness, a shot was fired, and a bullet struck him in the arm. The assailant closed in on the wounded man and battered his head with a gunstock. Then, throwing the gun into a

ditch, he vanished, leaving his victim's wallet untouched. Amasa Sprague had so many enemies that it was difficult to pick a suspect, but in those years a leading New England industrialist could not be murdered without finding someone to hang. Suspicion soon settled on three brothers by the name of Gordon; and in an atmosphere charged with religious and labor strife they were indicted, and one of them was sentenced to death. The murder was not settled with the trial, however. For years afterward in his dreams young William Sprague IV re-enacted that violent scene from his childhood. When he was almost forty, Sprague would say of himself, "His father died by the assassin's blow. For ten long years that dagger rested in his heart. In his daily avocations and in his nightly dreams he felt the blow that deprived him of his father."²⁷ Almost as if in rebellion against events he could not put behind him, he developed a rash courage, and as soon as he was old enough, he joined the Rhode Island militia.

The death of Sprague's father put his uncle, William Sprague III, in charge of the Sprague textile empire. His uncle also became young Sprague's legal guardian; but, except for the ghost of his father, the primary influence on his life thereafter was his mother, Fanny Morgan Sprague, a "dignified and ambitious woman," who came from a respected Connecticut family, including among its more illustrious members one J. P. Morgan. However much she desired for her son, Fanny Sprague soon saw that she would have to give up her plans for his education. After attending various Eastern academies, Sprague finally got his mother's consent to let him end his indifferent studying and go to work in the family's factory at Cranston, a few miles from where he was born. He was fifteen when his formal education was finished, except for some additional desultory work with tutors. Within a year he became a bookkeeper in the Providence countinghouse of A. and W. Sprague and Company, the firm that Sprague's father Amasa and his Uncle William had formed to husband the rich legacy of their father. There he remained for ten years. He seemed a quiet, modest young man, living with his mother in their mansion on Orchard Street. His brother Amasa was a sportsman; but William's interests, outside of business and the Rhode Island Marine Artillery, were few.²⁸

When he was twenty-six, his life changed. His uncle died, and the direction of the business devolved upon the next generation, upon young Sprague, his brother Amasa, and his cousin Byron. Neither his cousin nor his brother could match William Sprague's years of business experience, and it was not long before he was the dominant member of the firm, managing nine cotton mills and most of the other property of the family firm. He was a multimillionaire, one of the wealthiest men in the country.²⁹

Up to that time William Sprague IV had seemed a model young executive, devoted to business and his mother, industrious and patriotic, if somewhat deficient in learning. But by 1859, when he went to Europe, ostensibly to travel and study foreign armies, he did not appear to be the same uncomplicated young New Englander he had been a few years before. There were stories of a dark side of young Sprague's life, of affairs with women and a passion for drinking, and some people in Providence said that he went to Europe to escape open scandal.³⁰

These malicious stories were hard to prove, and they seemed forgotten when he returned in January of the following year. He received, Sprague recalled, "an ovation never theretofore given to a private citizen." Riding a fine white horse, he led a magnificent parade through the streets of Providence to the deafening cheers of the people. Sprague soon found out that the ovation was not entirely spontaneous. When the Radical wing of the Republican Party had nominated a candidate for the post of governor, the desperate conservatives of the party had decided to unite with the Democrats of the state behind their choice — William Sprague IV.

It suited family tradition to have one member of the Sprague family in politics. Sprague's uncle had been governor of Rhode Island as well as state senator and a Congressman in Washington before going into the United States Senate. Sprague knew that he could leave the family business in the competent hands of Cousin Byron Sprague and his brother Amasa. Still he was diffident. "I refused. . . . I was young; I had no political knowledge. . . . I was told that it was of national importance that the radical element should be suppressed. . . . finally I

consented." Sprague's mother, who had encouraged talk of his nomination, was pleased.³¹

It was a bitter and expensive campaign. Sprague's victory, including fanfare and votes, was said to have cost over one hundred thousand dollars. His campaign expenditures had been shrewdly handled, however, for he received a total vote not equaled for another seventeen years.³²

In going into politics, Sprague did not mean to abandon his business interests, and he resolutely kept one eye on his spinning jennies and another on the state legislature. In the spring of 1861, when clouds of war engulfed Fort Sumter and rolled on toward Washington, he seemed to forget his divided loyalties, and from the coffers of his firm came the money for horses, uniforms, and equipment for the troops. But, after the battle smoke along Bull Run cleared and the tolls had been taken and the rewards distributed, William Sprague once again heard the hum of the cotton jennies. Emerson once observed, "Cotton thread holds the union together. Patriotism [is] for holidays and summer evenings with rockets, but cotton thread is the union."³³ Cotton thread held the Sprague empire together; and William Sprague, disillusioned with holiday patriotism, found that war brought him problems that could not be solved by well-equipped batteries of light artillery. Somehow he had to supply his mills with cotton, cotton that he had always bought in the South. If he did not, he would be financially ruined. In that event, William Sprague, a slight, unprepossessing young man with a drooping mustache and quiet manners, would serve a term in the United States Senate and then drop forever from public attention.

When Congress had passed its edict allowing Southern ports to be closed, Lincoln had acknowledged that it was "like the Pope's bull to the comet — trade would go on in spite of law and executive proclamation." At the beginning of the war cotton was about ten cents a pound; but, like a barometer measuring the pressures against the blockade, prices rose steadily until by 1865 they were ten times that amount. Profits from cotton speculation could easily amount to over five hundred per cent. For that amount of money, many speculators could be

induced to bale up their patriotism until after the war. Knowing that the North needed cotton, the President and his Cabinet tried to hammer out a way to regulate the inevitable trade, but the result of much argument was only a vague policy allowing cotton to be brought out of the South if trading were done with loyal Union men and if no aid or comfort were given to the enemy, a policy that fell to Salmon P. Chase to administer.³⁴ Therefore, Chase was the man Sprague needed to know on the best possible terms.

As luck would have it, the Secretary had a beautiful, unattached daughter named Kate.

Usually when he was in Washington to attend to business or to see Kate, William Sprague stayed at Willard's Hotel, that great dark shadow on Pennsylvania Avenue near the Treasury Building. The atmosphere at Willard's was far from restful, but in spite of its inconveniences, offensive odors, and crowded halls, the hotel was one of the capital's most honored institutions. Containing "more scheming, plotting, planning heads . . . than any building of the same size ever held in the world," Willard's was a maelstrom of political bargain and sale — a place where the noisy, cumbersome machinery of politics was oiled and greased.³⁵

One night in September, 1862, about a month after his return from Corinth, William Sprague met a man named Harris Hoyt in its ornate lobby. Drawing the governor away from the noisy crowds, Hoyt confided an elaborate story about his having been thrown out of Texas for being a loyal Union man. Behind him he had been forced to leave his wife, children, and property, mostly cotton, he said. The mention of cotton aroused Sprague's deep sympathy, and his agitation grew as Hoyt told about the many other loyal Union men in Texas who had cotton to sell if they could only get it out through the blockading squadron of the Union navy, lying in a grim half circle along the coast. Hoyt then presented Sprague with an impressive document — his *pièce de résistance*: a "White House recommendation," signed by John Hay, Lincoln's private secretary. Sprague read it with care. "Mr. Harris Hoyt, who bears this letter, is recommended to the President as a true

and loyal citizen, by unquestionable authority. This letter is given to him at his request, to commend him to the confidence and kind offices of Union people on his way back home." The letter made clear that Hoyt was recommended *to* the President, not *by* him, but in a crowded hotel lobby, dim with cigar smoke, a man could overlook that distinction. It suited Sprague's purposes to assume that the Texan was recommended *by* the President, and so thereafter he always cheerfully referred to him in those terms. To the governor, the overriding fact was that Hoyt wanted to get cotton out of Texas. He should have been wary of Southern cotton planters, from whom, according to Henry Adams, "one could learn nothing but bad temper, bad manners, poker, and treason," but his greed mastered his caution. When the two parted late that night, Sprague said, "I will see what can be done."³⁶

Before coming to Sprague for help, Hoyt had made the rounds of Cabinet offices and, flashing his recommendation, had asked for a permit to bring cotton through the blockade. Everywhere he had met refusal. Both Gideon Welles, the bearded skeptic heading the Navy Department, and Edwin M. Stanton, the new Secretary of War, had seen through his flimsy story and refused him in unequivocal terms.³⁷ Upon learning from the gossip around Washington that Governor Sprague was frequently seen in the company of Kate Chase, the daughter of the man who could work miracles in the cotton trade, Hoyt had managed an introduction to him. The very next day, possibly because of the governor's advice, the Texan went back to see Chase in the hope that the Treasury door was still ajar. When the Secretary again refused him a trade permit and brusquely turned back to the work on his desk, Hoyt, flaring up in a sudden burst of irritation, threatened to "send Chase to Sprague and his partners."

Chase stared at him in amazement. "I wish you to understand that these gentlemen don't control me," he said hotly, and Hoyt was summarily turned out of the office.³⁸

Unperturbed by the turn of affairs, Sprague asked Hoyt to come to Providence for the first meeting of the board of directors of that strange enterprise that came to be known as the Texas Adventure. Hoyt brought along another Texan, Charles L. Prescott, a ship fitter

and engineer; and Sprague was there, along with his cousin Byron. In addition the governor had called in his friend William Reynolds, an old colleague in the militia and cotton business. A few months previously Reynolds, thanks to Sprague's hearty recommendations to Chase, had found himself a Treasury agent in charge of Union cotton operations at the fertile sea island Port Royal, South Carolina, recently captured from the Confederates. Unfortunately, Reynolds was an artless crook; and before he and Sprague could take full advantage of his position, Chase fired him for cheating and mistreating his Negro laborers.³⁹ Reynolds, therefore, was free to take part in whatever other profitable business venture might present itself.

Sprague told his friends that he had not been able to get a permit from Chase, but, certain that the Secretary would eventually come around, he urged that arrangements get under way without delay. Hoyt laid his plan before the group. He would need about one hundred thousand dollars from the companies of Sprague and Reynolds to buy "arms, ammunition, cotton-carding machinery," and other supplies, as well as the necessary ships, he said. Once the purchases were aboard ship, he would take his cargo into Texas, sell the arms and ammunition to the Confederate army, and with his cotton-carding machinery establish a textile factory as he had been commissioned to do by the Texas state legislature. All of the income from these ventures would be used to buy cotton, which he would ship North.⁴⁰

The plan was greeted with enthusiasm. Busy with official duties, for the time being William Sprague turned over the supervision of further details to his cousin Byron and Reynolds, who were to act as business managers at the Northern end of the operation. Prescott went off to New York City to buy the necessary ships. Hoyt's job was to fill their holds. First he went to Massachusetts to buy cotton-carding machinery and later to Washington to buy up Confederate money, a great deal of which he knew to be counterfeit. Then he set to work on the multifarious details of buying guns, ammunition, boots, bagging, ropes, and the rest of the miscellaneous contraband that was to compose the cargo.⁴¹

In the meantime Governor William Sprague joined other loyal Union governors at Altoona, Pennsylvania, and put his signature to their joint

pledge that ". . . we mean to continue in the most vigorous exercise of all our lawful and proper powers, contending against Treason, Rebellion, and the Public Enemies. . . ." ⁴² By the time he returned to Washington, the Texas Adventure was well under way. At Willard's Hotel he found a card from Secretary Chase, and he may have been reminded that he had one last important detail to attend to: getting the Secretary's official approval of the venture.

At that very time Chase was engaged in lengthy conversations with the Cabinet, Treasury men, and army officers about trade with the South. Lincoln and Chase were inclined toward relaxing the blockade at certain points, but Welles dissuaded them by arguing, "That to strictly maintain the blockade caused suffering I had no doubt; that was the chief object of the blockade. I was doing all in my power to make the rebellion unpopular. . . . The case was not one of sympathy but of duty."

When Chase said a few words in favor of limited trade, Welles said flatly, "Then raise the blockade. Act in good faith with all; let us have no favoritism. That is my policy. You must not use the blockade for domestic traffic or to enrich a few." Chase seemed impressed. ⁴³

Unaware of the Secretary's new resolve, Sprague and Reynolds wrote Chase strong recommendations for Hoyt, saying that he was a loyal Union man of Texas who desired to return to that state to get his family, help his Union friends bring out their cotton, and get important information for the government. Both asked that he be named a special Union agent and given permission to proceed through the blockade without inspection, but neither made clear why Hoyt required that singular assistance from the Union government. Sprague tried to distract Chase's attention from the question by extolling the Texan's trading mission. "The importance of getting out cotton when it can be done without giving aid and comfort to the enemy, you are well aware," he said. "Every bale we can procure helps to keep down the price of cotton and keeps bread in the mouths of our people — far more advantage to us than the equivalent given for it and especially if it can be conferred to those who are sympathizers of the Government." ⁴⁴

In presenting their case, Sprague and Reynolds omitted illuminating

details about who was backing the venture, how many ships were to be involved, and what the cargo would be on the trip south. Both put the "Union relief dodge," as Prescott and Hoyt cynically called their explanation of the plan, about as strongly as they could; but Chase, with good reasons for suspicion about the enthusiasms of the two, turned the proposal down flatly. Secretary of the Navy Welles was equally cold when he received a letter from Sprague identical to the one sent to Chase.⁴⁵

Sprague had too much money invested in Hoyt's plan to back down, and, determined to give the scheme the dignity of official approval, he pressed his request on the Secretary of the Treasury. It may have been mere coincidence that he and Kate suddenly had a quarrel that October; but Prescott and Reynolds were convinced they clashed over Sprague's obstinate demands on Chase for special favors for Hoyt. Whatever the cause of his squabble with Kate, the governor managed to keep on good terms with her father; and when she went to New York at the end of the month, he kept Chase company. Chase thought the misunderstanding unimportant, and in his letters to his daughter he cheerfully chronicled their attendance at embassy parties.⁴⁶

By the end of October, the arms and ammunition were purchased, the mill machinery was ready to go, the ships were seaworthy: all the preparations were completed — except for the last detail. When no official approval was forthcoming from Chase, Sprague had to make his decision: he could abandon the project or go ahead without approval. He decided to go on. William Sprague, the fighting governor, first volunteer of the war, Senator-elect from Rhode Island, was plotting treason.⁴⁷

In September, a few days after the secret conference in Providence, the bloodiest day of fighting in the entire war had occurred along a little Maryland creek called Antietam. Sprague could ignore that battle. He had fought his battle, and he had presented his plan for victory. He had made his last spectacular battlefield ride and had for the last time brushed with death on the front. Now he would retreat to his own dark, secret war. The enemy was the Federal blockading squadron; the risks, death for treason; the stakes, immense wealth and power.

The Texas Adventurers thought their chances of slipping through the blockade were good. When Gideon Welles became Secretary of the Navy in March, 1861, the Union navy boasted of only forty-two ships in commission, and most of those were abroad. When the blockade was declared a month later, the Secretary found himself faced with the duty of patrolling a coast line of three and a half thousand miles, hemmed with sounds, bayous, rivers, and inlets, in addition to the Mississippi and its tributaries. Sprague and his friends knew that it would be a long time before Welles had a tight grasp on that vast area; but as a precaution against discovery, the partners urged Sprague to write Hoyt letters of introduction to substitute for a trade permit from Gideon Welles or Salmon P. Chase. If Hoyt were stopped by a ship of the Union blockading squadron, a strong recommendation from a man of Sprague's importance might get him through, they argued. Sprague agreed; and on October 30, he wrote letters to General Benjamin F. Butler, commanding the Department of New Orleans, and to the officer commanding the Gulf Squadron, commending Hoyt as one who was on his way to help loyal citizens of Texas and secure information for the Union cause. He did not mention cotton.⁴⁸

The original plan had been to operate from Galveston; but when that port fell to the Union navy at the beginning of October, a new scheme had to be worked out. It was decided that, instead of going through the blockade, Hoyt would go around it by heading for Matamoras, Mexico. Since the beginning of the war, that hot, dirty frontier town across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas, had become a noisy trade center, teeming with cotton speculators from Northern states. From there Hoyt was to proceed by wagon train to Houston, where he would make contact with his Texas cotton speculators and sell his wares to Confederate authorities.

Obviously the conspirators could not have hoped to get a clearance from customs officials for their unusual cargo if its destination had been openly proclaimed as being Matamoras, but they found a way to get around that difficulty. Along the coast of the United States there were, as the Secretary of the Navy said, "a multitude of island harbors under foreign jurisdiction, looking nearly upon our shore and afford-

ing the most convenient lurking places from which illicit commerce may leap forth to its prohibited destination and purpose." ⁴⁹ Sprague and his partners decided to take advantage of those harbors of refuge. Hoyt would head for Spanish Havana with the approval of New York officials and from there would sail for Mexico under British registry.

If Secretary Chase had complied with Sprague's and Reynolds's urgent requests to name Hoyt a secret Union agent, the enterprising Texan would have started south in the singular position of being an agent at the same time for both the Union and the Confederacy, for he already had a charter from Confederate authorities in Texas to establish a cotton mill; he would have gathered military information for the North while supplying the South with arms, in addition to running the Union blockade with cotton purchased with counterfeit Confederate money.⁵⁰ If there was one time during the war when the North and South could have acted with unanimity, it should have been to hang one Harris Hoyt.

The Texan had trouble getting his cargo out of New York; but finally in December, 1862, he set sail from Havana for Matamoras, confident that he had slipped away from Union authorities without arousing suspicion.⁵¹

He was mistaken. The American consul general in Havana had decided to write Rear Admiral D. G. Farragut, in command of the Gulf Squadron, about Hoyt's ship. "The American schooner *Snow Drift*, of New York, arrived here lately from that port and from certain mysterious movements and from the character of her cargo, I am inclined to think is bound for Matamoras," he said. "If you fall in with her, I am quite sure she would prove a legal prize. She seems to be one of those cases which renders it necessary to be watchful of 'our friends.'" ⁵²

CHAPTER IV

The Owl and the Comet

DURING her first winter in Washington Kate Chase had become the foremost political hostess of the capital. The Chases' Wednesday receptions had been crowded with her admirers, and she was famous for her intimate dinners, served with superb grace and flavored with the confidences of the shrewd and powerful. But by August, 1862, the social season was over, and war had intruded on that most civilized game of skill and daring—politics. The wounded returned from the peninsula to a shocked and unprepared city, and the unexpected invasion intruded upon Kate's designs almost as much as if the army of Robert E. Lee were encamped upon the Mall. Party dresses and clever remarks were suddenly irrelevant, and personal ambition seemed a transgression. Kate gave large donations for the relief of destitute women and visited a few hospitals, but she was ill at ease with broken men. One reporter remarked acidly that she "shrank from the hard and lowly task of visiting the wretched hut, the sick, and the afflicted."¹

When her father decided that Washington was no longer safe, Kate, having won the first objective in her campaign, was not sorry to leave the city. She and Nettie went to New York to spend some peaceful days with the wife of General McDowell at Buttermilk Falls in the pleasant countryside along the Hudson River. Nettie was happy there, but Kate soon grew bored. She had no aptitude for serenity; quiet surroundings only made her dissatisfied and irritable, reminding her of the stagnation of finishing school. Mrs. McDowell finally had to write her father that she had gone to Saratoga. "Nettie, I think, has enjoyed her visit but it is very dull for Kate. Our hours do not suit her and the cooking does not agree with her." Worried about her husband, Mrs. McDowell

had no heart for entertaining temperamental guests, and she added with ill-disguised relief, "When the opportunity offered I was glad she took advantage of it for she would have been ill, I think, if she had remained. . . ." ²

While Kate went off to more stimulating climes, her father busied himself with matters of high policy in Washington. War fever had infected the Secretary of the Treasury with an inflated estimate of his military sagacity. In spite of his modest experience in such matters, perhaps because of it, he fancied himself quite a military expert; and throughout the war he spent hours poring over maps and penning out detailed letters of advice to the commanding officers of the army. Eventually his efforts won him the title of "corresponding secretary," if few battles.³ In those extrafinancial activities, Chase felt that he was doing no more than his duty. It was said in the capital that every morning, as he surveyed himself in the shaving mirror, he paused and intoned, "Good morning, Mr. President." Chase, it was clear, was firmly convinced that he, instead of Lincoln, should have been occupying the White House; and, thinking himself far wiser than the President in important matters, he proceeded to arrogate to himself the management of the war.

One of his primary duties, Chase felt, was to keep a supervisory eye on his archenemy General George B. McClellan. The general had always hated abolitionists; and, as Northern Democrats coalesced around him, he had begun to act as if his ambitions, like Chase's, were not limited to success in his official duties. Chase saw a threat to his political future, nor was he alone in his apprehension. Politicians, engaged in the modest work of legislation and investigation, began to suspect that they were nurturing a spectacular rival — a general who did not accord with the congressional picture of a humble public servant.

Suspiciously Chase had seen the general embark for the peninsula in the early spring of 1862; and angrily he had watched the sticky advance upon Richmond, grumbling loudly all the while that the campaign was not being managed according to his instructions. When the general dallied before going to the aid of General Pope during the disastrous Second Battle of Bull Run, Chase, along with Secretary of

War Stanton, prepared an ultimatum designed, as he admitted, "to tell the President that the administration must be broken up or McC[lellan] dismissed."⁴ When asked to sign it, the irascible Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles told Chase heatedly that his conspiracy to control the President was "disrespectful, and would justly be deemed offensive; that the President had called us around him as friends and advisors . . . not to enter into combinations to control him."⁵

Welles's opposition killed the scheme, and to Chase's indignation Lincoln put McClellan in command of the troops falling back on the capital. After the First Battle of Bull Run, Little Napoleon had worked miracles with the army; now Lincoln staked everything on his being able to work them again. Chase commented darkly that ". . . giving command to him [is] equivalent to giving Washington to the rebels."⁶

Chase's despair over Union finances gave heat to his opposition to the general. Every Federal defeat made more difficult his job of keeping government bonds at par on the market. By the second summer of the war, he desperately needed a military victory to restore confidence in the government, but McClellan's viscous advance upon Richmond had been halted and turned back. Finding that bond sales did not keep apace of expenses, Chase was forced to issue paper currency; but inflation soon consumed the monetary advantage of more currency. When it was proposed at a Cabinet meeting that the legend "In God We Trust," which Chase had devised for coins, be engraved on the greenbacks as well, Lincoln said wryly, "If you are going to put a legend on the greenbacks, I would suggest that of Peter and John: 'Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have I give thee.'"⁷

Chase was offended when the President made light of the grave financial crisis. During September, 1862, he wrote portentously in his diary: "*It is a bad state of things; but neither the President, his counselors, nor his commanding general, seem to care.* They rush on from expense to expense, and from defeat to defeat, heedless of the abyss of bankruptcy and ruin which yawns before us. May God open the eyes of those who control us, before it is too late!"⁸ He wrote Kate that "the siege threatens and the heat is insufferable," and advised her not to re-

turn to Washington.⁹ The situation was desperate. Stanton warned that at any moment the capital might be cut off from the North.¹⁰

As the fighting dragged on without conclusion, the Radicals in the Republican Party became more and more insistent in their demands that the war be broadened into a crusade to end slavery; but Lincoln up until then had held resolutely to the idea that the North was fighting solely to preserve the Union. Chase, like his political friends, was outraged at this attitude. Blind to the President's need to bridge the extremes of his party with a moderate policy, Chase thought him weak, indecisive, a failure as a leader. A friend of Lincoln's reported angrily: "[Chase] informed me that the government had no plan nor policy, that it was time to have one, and—with a kindling face and outstretched arm—'It would have one if I were President!'"¹¹

Chase realized that he risked being removed from the Treasury Department if he were boldly rebellious against the President. On the other hand, to avoid sending his friends in search of another leader, he had to show them that, although he sat with Lincoln, his heart was with them. The Secretary of the Treasury did what he could in his anomalous position, but his strategy was devious and risky. Without losing his post or appearing outrageously disloyal, he had to turn against Lincoln in times of administration crisis. If he could stand out in victory but stand back from defeat, disassociate himself from unpopular policies and claim credit for popular ones, he was certain that the distinction wrung from Lincoln's administration would put him in the White House in 1864.

After Pope's defeat, he grumbled loudly behind Lincoln's back. "We have fallen on evil days," he cried, and he boldly laid the blame on the President for refusing to recognize slavery as the controlling issue of the war. Chase deplored the demoralization of the North and then took heart. "It is some consolation to me that my voice and, so far as opportunity has allowed, my example has been steadily opposed to all this. I have urged my ideas on the President and my associates, till I begin to feel that they are irksome. . . ." ¹²

By then Chase's conduct had become not only irksome but unseemly.

When Lincoln relieved the theatrical General Frémont for freeing the slaves in Missouri on his own authority, Chase showed where his sympathies lay by writing a newspaper article in support of military emancipation. Lincoln generously spared him Frémont's fate. Later when General David Hunter went even further by enfranchising the slaves in his department, Chase hastily penned a note to Lincoln urging that the general's action be upheld. "It will be cordially approved, I am sure, by more than nine-tenths of the people on whom you must rely for support of your administration," he said soothingly.¹³ At least Chase was sure that nine tenths of *his* supporters would approve.

In his reply Lincoln left no doubt about who was President. "No commanding general shall do such a thing, upon *my* responsibility, without consulting me." Henry D. Cooke wrote his brother: "[Chase] don't like it at all, but if he takes the advice I gave him, he will yield to Lincoln in this matter with good grace." Chase yielded, but he told important Republicans that the decision was the worst of the "sore trials" he had faced since the war began.¹⁴

With Pope's defeat, Lincoln knew that he would soon be forced to change his policy on slavery. "We had about played our last card, and must change our tactics, or lose the game," he admitted. ". . . we must free the slaves or be ourselves subdued."¹⁵

Chase did not appear jubilant at the prospect of having Abraham Lincoln become the Great Emancipator. When the President announced his intentions to his Cabinet, the Treasury Secretary said stiffly that he thought "emancipation could be much better and more quietly accomplished by allowing generals to organize and arm the slaves . . . [and] proclaim emancipation within their districts. . . ." ¹⁶

Sharp-eyed Gideon Welles saw Chase's point. Afterward he wrote in his diary: "Chase gathers [the issue] into the coming Presidential election; feels that the measure of emancipation, which was decided without first consulting him, has placed the President in advance of him in a path which was his specialty."¹⁷

Lincoln, too, shrewdly saw why Chase preferred emancipation by military order. It would appear that the President, instead of initiating the policy, was at last giving in to his Radical advisers and their

favorite generals, who liked to dabble in politics and philanthropy along with high military strategy. No one person would take the credit — unless it were the outspoken Secretary of the Treasury. Lincoln listened thoughtfully to the suggestion and then announced that he would issue the proclamation himself. Seward persuaded him to await a Union victory so that the announcement would not seem “our last shriek on retreat.”¹⁸

While the President waited for General McClellan to meet General Lee in Maryland, Chase desperately looked for a way to exploit his place as champion of the Negro before he was robbed of that distinction. He decided to try a bold stroke. Writing to General Benjamin F. Butler, his old friend in things political, he urged him to emancipate all the slaves in the Gulf states. “It may be said that such an order would be annulled. I think not,” he commented mysteriously. “It is plain enough to see that the annulling of Hunter’s order was a mistake. It will be not repeated.”¹⁹ Butler stalled too long to steal Lincoln’s thunder, and Chase had to content himself with doing his best to kindle the dissension smoldering in the North. In the weeks before the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, he whispered criticism, derogation, and impatience to editors, powerful friends, to Senators and ministers. To them he did not hint as he had to Butler what was in the President’s mind.

On September 17, 1862, the armies of General McClellan and General Lee fell upon each other at Antietam Creek, about fifty miles northwest of the capital, and fought for fourteen agonizing hours on the green hills of Maryland. One Union corps, enfiladed by Confederate fire, lost two thousand men in twenty minutes, and by evening ten times that number lay dead and wounded on the battlefield. All during the next day the two dazed armies stared across the blood-soaked fields between them, but by the following morning General Lee and his army had silently moved away. The Army of the Potomac had lost its chance to destroy the enemy, lying helpless with its back against a river, but at last it had fought and not been driven from the field in defeat. The wave of gray receded into Virginia, the bloody ground dried, and the North took heart.

Now, with a victory in his pocket, Lincoln was ready to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. When he told his Cabinet, Chase, knowing that he could not court the Radicals by raising objections, reluctantly gave the President his support. "The Proclamation does not, indeed, mark out exactly the course I would myself prefer," he said when it was his turn to speak. "But I am ready to take it . . . and to stand by it with all my heart."²⁰

He suggested that the announcement be concluded by invoking "the gracious favor of Almighty God," and Lincoln agreed. Later, when a noted abolitionist complimented him on that phrase, Lincoln said very slowly, "Well, I should be a quack if I accepted any praise for that. It was Chase gave me that notion."²¹

Kate ended her vacation in time to be in Washington when John Hay and other friends, all in a "glorious humor," serenaded her father in celebration of the President's proclamation. She returned "looking very well," her father thought;²² but, in spite of the festivities at Sixth and E streets, Kate did not have a happy homecoming. That period was the autumn of her father's discontent. He was furious that McClellan still commanded an army. The government finances had proved a trackless waste that took hours of his precious time, hours that might have been spent in tearing power from Lincoln. The final blow had been Lincoln's taking over the emancipation issue. Time was running short, and Chase was little nearer his goal of the Presidency. He was relieved that Kate was home. He needed help.

The first order of business was to find a general to replace McClellan, who after his meager victory at Antietam had immediately become mired down in Maryland while Lee slipped away to the defense of Richmond. Chase knew that a successful general backing a successful Cabinet member could make a President; and, therefore, he was determined to hand-pick the heroes of victory. His prerequisites were relatively simple: the victorious Union general had to be right on the Negro question; he had to have no personal political ambitions; he had to have a kind side for Chase; and last and not least, he had to have some military ability.

General McDowell was his idea of a model major general. ". . . he never drinks, or smokes [as McClellan], or chews, or indulges in any kind of license," Chase said approvingly. Even when it was clear that the general did not indulge in victories either, Chase held fast to him, saying, "He is serious and earnest. He resorts to no acts of popularity. He has no political aims, and perhaps not any very pronounced political opinions, except the conviction that this war sprang from the influence of slavery, and that, whenever slavery stands in the way of successful prosecution, slavery must get out of the way." Another of Chase's favorites was General John Pope, the essence of aggressive self-confidence, full of fight and rhetoric, with a penchant for military dispatches that began: "Headquarters in the saddle," and, "The troops will move at the first blush of dawn." Pope was recommended by his opinions of McClellan and slavery.²³

Kate felt perfectly at ease in helping her father advise the President on his military officers. Like the other ladies of Washington, she made it a custom to visit the troops encamped near the capital. Frequently, dressed in one of her rich, full-skirted visiting dresses, she rode out to spend an afternoon at the headquarters of a general, and occasionally she even took fruit or flowers to troops from Ohio. On the occasions when her picture was taken, Kate, surrounded by high-ranking officers, primly held her parasol and smiled like a provocative Mona Lisa. Before long, she, like her father, felt that she knew something about military affairs; and she wrote Lincoln "a modest but earnest plea" in favor of a general she wanted promoted. She was equally outspoken when Lincoln removed one of the Chases' favorites. Eventually John Hay observed with amusement: "Pretty Katie spoke a little spitefully about [General] Rosecrans' removal. Her father's old game."²⁴

Knowing that General Joseph Hooker was one of the few West Point officers who was right on the slavery question, Kate and Chase hastened to call upon him in the hospital when he was convalescing from a wound sustained at Antietam. They were charmed to find him full of fight, especially in regard to McClellan, and brimming over with the conviction that, had he been in charge, he could have turned the Peninsular Campaign and the battle at Antietam into decisive Union vic-

tories. Chase, who had said much the same about himself, sympathized with the general's feelings. He and Kate left with the impression that the effusive General Hooker was manly, brave, and energetic; but they were forced to conclude that he was not conspicuously intelligent. Chase remained convinced, however, that Hooker was a general whom he could support wholeheartedly. Hooker's friends had advised him that the general's ambitions were entirely military.²⁵ If he fitted into the military category of the stupid but industrious, Chase did not mind. The Secretary of the Treasury would be willing to handle problems of high strategy.

Along with Hooker, Chase added General James A. Garfield to his unofficial general staff.²⁶ When the Secretary of War ordered the Ohioan to Washington in the summer of 1862, Chase gave him secret information on his chances of getting a command in Florida and generously invited him to stay at his home until the general could find quarters more comfortable than Willard's Hotel. Garfield accepted; and, finding the Chases had "a fine residence and [lived] in splendid style," he stayed almost two months. The young man paid for his board and room by cheerfully taking the Chases' relatives sight-seeing around the capital when Kate and her father were busy; and, while Sprague was occupied with the organization of the Texas Adventure, he accompanied Kate on her visits to the headquarters of generals and went riding with her, sometimes as far as ten miles through the parks of the capital or in the countryside beyond the city. They were a striking couple: General Garfield, his face flushed and his beard flying, Kate with her hair glistening in the sun as she cantered beside him on her magnificent mare Atalanta. Garfield thought Chase was an excellent horseman, but for Kate he reserved his greatest admiration. "She is a splendid rider," he declared. To his family in Ohio, he wrote: "Kate is quite a belle here from what I learn. . . . She is a woman of good sense and pretty good culture — has a good form but not a pretty face, its beauty being marred by a nose slightly inclined to pug."²⁷ Very few of Kate's other admirers would find fault with her impertinent little nose; somehow it seemed to suit her.

General Garfield's admiration for the Chases was richly rewarded.

Kate and her father were confident of the military abilities of a young man with moral fervor, impeccable personal habits, and a fondness for poetry; and they would do what they could for his career.

In November, Lincoln finally gave in to the Radicals by removing General McClellan from his command and putting General Burnside in his place. Although Burnside was not the man he had picked for the job, Chase was exultant.²⁸ If, by replacing McClellan, Lincoln hoped to put an end to the civil war his own party was fighting, he was deceived. With McClellan out of the way, Chase and the Radicals could turn their undivided animosity on another enemy — William H. Seward, Secretary of State.

Except for Lincoln himself, Chase's greatest rival was Seward — leader of the moderate Republicans, the man who had almost received the party nomination in 1860 and had later intrigued to keep Chase out of the Cabinet entirely. When Lincoln, shrugging off pressures from both extremes of his party, formed a coalition Cabinet with both Chase and Seward, the two men glowered at each other, each determined to run the administration to his liking, each ignoring the figure who sat between them, each confident that he could control the President. Gideon Welles summed up the uneasy situation: "Between Seward and Chase there was perpetual rivalry and mutual but courtly distrust. Each was ambitious. Both had capacity. Seward was supple and dexterous; Chase was clumsy and strong. Seward made constant mistakes, but recovered with a facility that was wonderful and almost without injury to himself; Chase committed fewer blunders, but persevered in them when made, often to his own serious detriment. In the fevered condition of public opinion, the aims and policies of the [two] were strongly developed."²⁹

At first many thought Lincoln ill-advised in inviting his rivals to the highest council of state, but Lincoln was no fool. "When I was elected I resolved to hire my . . . presidential rivals, pay them their wages, and be their boss," he said. Seward soon discovered that Lincoln was not the rustic he appeared; and before long he, unlike Chase, was willing to admit, "The President is the best of us."³⁰

Lincoln gladly forgave Seward his original presumption, for he was a competent Secretary of State, the most important moderate in the Cabinet, and, above all, a good companion. Seward was always ready to laugh, and Lincoln fell into the habit of slipping away from the Himalayan heap of problems at the White House for a few minutes of relaxation in Seward's house on the east side of Lafayette Square. There in the library Seward would light up a cigar, the President would stretch out his long legs before the fireplace, and the two would swap yarns.

One evening after a trying day, Lincoln and his young secretary John Hay strolled into Seward's library.

"No more bad news, I hope, Mr. President?" asked the startled Seward.

"No, nothing further," said Lincoln, "but Hay happened to find a book that amused us, so I told him we would walk over to Seward's and read it to him and have a laugh over it." Hay held up a Portuguese guide to English conversation entitled *English as She Is Spoke*.⁸¹

Jealously Chase watched the intimacy of the two men grow. Blind to the fact that the distance between himself and the President was more than geographic, he attributed the warm friendship to Seward's living near the White House. It did not occur to him that only a man of reckless daring would have dropped into his study with a book entitled *English as She Is Spoke*. Lincoln would never take the risk. The Secretary of the Treasury comported himself with an inviolable ecclesiastical gravity, and his smiles and frowns usually had moral overtones. He repeated psalms while bathing or dressing; and if he ever did tell a joke, he gave the impression of a cleric trying to be folksy.

Well aware of Chase's total lack of a sense of humor, Lincoln occasionally amused himself and the rest of the Cabinet at his Secretary's expense. Chase would relate those scenes to his friends in an aggrieved tone; Seward was barely able to stifle his laughter while giving his version. Lincoln needed Chase to keep his Cabinet balanced between Radicals and moderates, but he always kept his relationship with him on a severely official basis. Gideon Welles epitomized his attitude: "Seward comforts him. Chase he deems a necessity."⁸²

The friendship of Seward and Lincoln was particularly vexing to

Chase when it became clear that Lincoln did not mean to consult his entire Cabinet before making important decisions. The President's casual attitude toward his Cabinet was part of his unmethodical, cracker-barrel approach to statecraft. Hay said later, ". . . it was a four year struggle on Nicolay's part and mine to get him [Lincoln] to adopt some systematic rules." But Lincoln had reasons for treating his Cabinet as he did. Painfully aware of their diverse, irreconcilable views and knowing that he himself was responsible for major policies, he made decisions with the advice of whomever he chose. "There is but one vote in the Cabinet and that is cast by the President," said Seward. To his immense displeasure Chase found that his Treasury post did not guarantee him control over major administration policies and that more often than not the President was not even interested in his opinions.³³

Chase thought Lincoln was making a serious mistake. Observed one Treasury employee, "Mr. Chase honestly felt his superiority to Mr. Lincoln in some respects, and could not be reconciled to his undignified manners and strange ways." The most unacceptable of Lincoln's crude manners was his tendency to respect his own opinions above those of most others. Hay said, "It is absurd to call [Lincoln] a modest man. No great man was ever modest. It was his intellectual arrogance and unconscious assumption of superiority that men like Chase and Sumner could never forgive." The people understood Lincoln well, Hay thought, but the "patent leather kid glove set know no more of him than an owl does of a comet, blazing into his blinking eyes."³⁴

Chase was unsettled by his small voice in affairs mainly because Lincoln followed a policy unpopular with his Radical friends. He blamed Seward for his lack of influence. As long as Seward had a malignant hold on the President, Chase told himself, the moderate wing of the party would be dominant and he would be pushed along alien paths. Of course, he had the privilege of resigning when he disagreed with the President; and for a time in the late summer and autumn of 1862, when the fortunes of the administration were at a dangerously low ebb, Chase considered running for the Senate to escape identification with compromise, defeat, and failure. Knowing that unless he picked

the time of his resignation carefully he would leap into a void, leaving the leadership of the Radicals to an ambitious Senator or a victorious general, he eventually decided to stay on in the Treasury rather than risk his fortunes on the unpredictable ballot. His only course seemed to be to disassociate himself as far as possible from Lincoln's policies. Henry D. Cooke told his brother, "The Governor says . . . he is not willing to be held accountable for other people's blunders or errors of policy. I am sure that he would like to have it known that the President's policy is his own and not that suggested by his cabinet."³⁵

There was one other recourse. Chase and his Radical friends in Congress waited for a chance to remove Seward from the Cabinet.

General Burnside unwittingly offered them their opportunity a little more than a month after he took command of the Army of the Potomac. With misgivings, he led the army into the teeth of General Lee's artillery at Fredericksburg, and at the end of that cruel day in December over twelve thousand Federal troops were dead, wounded, or missing. Three days after the disastrous defeat, Republican Senators gathered en masse in the Senate reception room to decide who was to be blamed. In the ensuing discussion one Senator announced mysteriously that a "cabinet official [had] told him of back stairs influence which often controlled the apparent conclusions of the Cabinet itself." Although he refused to name names, his references were clear. Secretary Chase had frequently used those very words in his complaints about Seward. A Senator offered a resolution expressing a lack of confidence in the Secretary of State; but when several Senators expressed qualms about presenting their views to the President in that form, a more moderate declaration calling for a partial reconstruction of the Cabinet was passed.³⁶

All but three Republican Senators approved. Two were absent; the third slipped away before the vote to warn Mr. Seward, enjoying a cigar before the fireplace in his library. Hearing that the Senators, "thirsty for a victim," had chosen him, Seward said quietly, "They may do as they please about me, but they shall not put the President in a false position on my account." He hastily scrawled out his resignation and sent it across the square to the White House.³⁷ When

Lincoln came over to express his regret, Seward said he was actually relieved.

"Ah, yes, Governor," Lincoln said slowly, "that will do very well for you, but I am like the starling in Sterne's story. 'I can't get out.'" ³⁸

The President was urbane and cheerful as he heard a delegation of Senators present their demand, but beneath his mask of confidence he was worried and despondent. To one caller he confided, "Since I heard last night of the proceedings of the caucus, I have been more distressed than by any event of my life." ³⁹ The Union Army had suffered a serious defeat; another general had shown his incompetence; and now there was a conspiracy afoot to revolutionize the government by making the executive subordinate to the legislature—and to the Radicals.

There was talk among certain army officers of establishing a military dictatorship to cope with the war emergency. Meddlesome Radical politicians, scornful of professional soldiers, thought how splendid Salmon P. Chase would look leading the Union army on Richmond. General James A. Garfield reported later: "[Chase] looks finely on a horse. There was considerable talk, during the cabinet troubles, of putting him at the head of the army." ⁴⁰

One of Lincoln's friends warned him of the seriousness of the crisis. "I told him the attack in the Senate caucus upon Mr Seward was by the partizans of Mr Chase, and that I had reason to believe that he had set them on. That their game was to drive all the cabinet out—then force upon him the recall of Mr Chase as Premier, and form a cabinet of ultra [Radical] men around him." The President replied with feeling that he was master and that they would not succeed. ⁴¹

Lincoln promptly pulled a trick from his stovepipe hat. He invited the Senate committee and members of his Cabinet, with the exception of Seward, into his office, declared that he was unaware of any disunity in his official family, and offered to let his advisers give their own opinions. First he called on Salmon P. Chase.

Chase found that he had been finessed by a backwoods lawyer. If he were disloyal to Lincoln by supporting the committee, he would lose public support and his Cabinet post. If he took Lincoln's side against the Senators, he would lose face with his powerful allies in Congress

and dangerously loosen his hold on the leadership of the Radicals. Furious at finding himself in such a predicament, he said darkly that he would not have come had he known that he was to be arraigned before a committee of the Senate, an unfortunate reproof to men who thought they were doing him a favor. Trying desperately to hedge, he stumbled on to say that questions of importance generally had been considered by the Cabinet, although not always as fully as he had desired. Then, perhaps with an uneasy thought about his colleagues and Lincoln, silently standing by, he added that there was no lack of unity in the Cabinet, but actually a general acquiescence on public matters. Certainly, he concluded piously, there was never opposition by any member of the Cabinet once a decision was made.⁴²

In trying to escape from his embarrassment, Chase seriously offended all sides. Leading newspapers of the North denounced him as the Mephistopheles of the Cabinet and blamed him for the government crisis; and Lincoln's friends called him "knavish, dishonest and corrupt. . . ." ⁴³ Nor had he pleased his friends in the Senate. When the chairman of the committee laid before the Senate caucus his report of the meeting with the President and Cabinet, one politician asked incredulously how Chase could have said what he did "in the presence of Senators to whom he had said that Seward exercised a back stair and malign influence upon the President and thwarted all the measures of the Cabinet."

"He lied!" stormed the chairman.⁴⁴

Chase found himself a marked man. If he remained in the Cabinet after Seward was forced out, public opinion might force him to resign, too. If not, his future as a public official would be made untenable by the opposition of Seward's powerful friends.⁴⁵

Edwin M. Stanton, the Secretary of War, saw in the situation an opportunity to rise in the world. He had originally come into the Cabinet with the approval of both Chase and Seward, but once in office he seemed to go over to Chase entirely. The Treasury Secretary, however, was warned that his good friend in the War Department wore "two faces." Stanton, his large, striking eyes hidden behind steel-rim glasses, his mouth smothered by a secret, grizzly beard, was a mystery

that no biographer has ever unlocked; but one thing is certain: he wanted power.⁴⁶ He was discreetly silent during the meeting of the Cabinet and Senators; but afterward he told one Senator that the conference was one of the most impressive scenes he had ever witnessed, that he had been particularly struck by the dignity and propriety of the Senators and "ashamed of Chase, for he knew better." The Senators would not forget Stanton's loyalty, and there would come a time when they would be able to repay him.⁴⁷

Stanton did not desert his friend completely. On the morning following the surprise conference, he appeared in Lincoln's office with Chase. When the President arrived, he turned immediately to his Secretary of the Treasury.

"I sent for you, for this matter is giving me great trouble," he said.

Chase replied that he had been painfully affected by the unexpected meeting the night before. The episode left him no other choice but to hand in his resignation.

"Where is it?" asked Lincoln abruptly, his eyes lighting up.

"I brought it with me. I wrote it this morning," said Chase, taking a paper from his pocket.

"Let me have it," said Lincoln.

Somewhat taken aback, Chase hesitated for a moment as if he were going to say something, but Lincoln reached over and whipped the letter out of his hand. He laughed triumphantly. "This cuts the Gordian knot," he said, leaning back in his chair. "I can dispose of this subject now without difficulty. I can see my way clear."

Shocked at the summary treatment of his friend, Stanton announced solemnly that if the President desired, he could "consider my resignation at this time in your possession."

"You may go to your Department," said Lincoln rudely. "I don't want yours." Holding Chase's letter out, he said, "This is all I want . . . the trouble is ended."⁴⁸

Moody and taciturn, Chase left.

Lincoln was elated; for as long as the representatives of both extremes had resigned, he was not in danger of having his Cabinet fall to either faction. "Now I have the biggest half of the hog," he chuckled,

holding up Chase's letter. "I shall accept neither resignation." He sent an identical letter to both Seward and Chase informing them of his decision. Seward immediately accepted the invitation to return, but Chase gave in with a great show of reluctance, making it clear that his first decision had been to remain away. He did not explain why he changed his mind, but the truth was that he feared the Cabinet might fall into the hands of the conservatives or, equally disastrous, that one of his loyal friends, like Stanton, might become the champion of the Radicals. Neither possibility recommended itself to him. Then, too, he had to remember that he needed the Treasury Department to oil his political machine; and so, defeated and discredited, he was forced to give in.⁴⁹

Lincoln had won the first phase of a long campaign. He had brought the fight of the extremes of his party to a stalemate, the Cabinet was still a coalition, and Chase had lost face with the Radicals. For two years Lincoln had managed to outsmart his Secretary of the Treasury, who was trying to run the government to his liking. The fight was not over, however. Lincoln knew that Chase would continue to meddle and conspire, to criticize and subvert and scheme until he reached the White House. The President meant to oppose Chase to the last. At times during the grave crises his administration suffered, Lincoln may have considered stepping aside for a successor like Seward, but he never thought of giving way for a man like Chase. One Cabinet member said that Chase "was the only human being that I believe Lincoln actually hated."⁵⁰

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CHAPTER V

Jephthah's Daughter

A FRIEND wrote Chase: "Without money — there is no Enthusiasm. No Ambition. It constitutes the locks of the giant, when he is shorn of them, his strength and vigor vanishes and he falls an easy prey to his enemies," and, Chase could have added, to his friends.¹

Since coming to Washington, he had learned that great ambitions were costly. In the golden prewar days, when Cabinet members had lived royally, Chase had been a Senator living modestly in a boarding-house and worrying about the doctor bills of his dying wife; but when he returned to the capital a second time, his wife was dead, and ambition was his mistress. Sumptuous hospitality was still an avenue of power, and Chase knew that if he wanted to be President, he would have to court Washington as if she were a wise old strumpet.

He put Kate in charge of providing his home with the required distinction, and within a few months it was one of the most luxurious and beautiful in the capital. Kate spared no expense either for the house or for her own clothes. One Ohio newspaper, if exaggerating details, caught the spirit of her shopping sprees. "The Lincoln-Chase contest has extended into the women's department," the newspaper announced. "Mrs. Lincoln has got a new French rig with all the posies, costing \$4,000. Miss Chase sees her and goes one better, by ordering a nice little \$6,000 arrangement, including a \$3,000 love of a shawl. Go it, greenbacks, while it is yet today."²

Kate made her selections, and her father paid the price — rather, he tried; but even though he sold some of his Ohio real estate, he found it impossible to keep ahead of the spiral of bills. His chief political rival, Mr. Lincoln, received a large official fund for entertaining, and some of his lesser rivals were wealthy enough to reach into their own

pockets to make up their deficits. Salmon P. Chase was not so fortunate: he had to reach into other people's pockets, namely Jay Cooke's. That necessity made him nervous, and he frequently reminded his friend with light tone but earnest intent, "The Secretary of the Treasury . . . is a very peculiar person and don't like private and public matters mixed. Please commence all your letters on public matters to him with 'Sir.'" ³

In spite of his caution, both Congress and the country wondered at his friendship with the banker; and in October, 1862, when Jay Cooke became the sole private agent for a large issue of government bonds, many began to wonder if there was not something more than friendship between them. Captious New York bankers raised a din of protest over Cooke's new appointment. Why, they cried, should this upstart Philadelphian usurp financial leadership of the country while the vast economic know-how of New York lay fallow? Why indeed? asked certain Congressmen privately; and finally, on the day Chase returned to the Treasury Department after the Cabinet crisis, the question was raised on the floor of the House. When a committee was appointed to determine if any government official had a connection with any banking house doing business with the government,⁴ the Secretary of the Treasury trembled lest his reputation for saintly righteousness be defiled. He was saved when his friends in Congress saw to it that the investigation came to nothing.

The private correspondence between Chase and Jay Cooke dwindled away abruptly; but, after a decent interlude, the banker sent the Secretary a check for \$425, saying that, although he had not invested any money for his friend of late, he was only awaiting Chase's request.⁵ At the moment Chase did not dare send the word. Jay Cooke was too costly a patron. Some other financial solution had to be found.

By then Kate Chase was seeing a great deal of the young millionaire William Sprague.

The young man had taken to spending much of his time in the capital. Washington had grown sober since the day he first marched up

Pennsylvania Avenue with his troops. Now the city knew war intimately, knew that it was not parades, band concerts, and slogans. Men on crutches were in the streets, and every available building had been converted into a temporary hospital. But when Sprague stopped listening to the cadence of drums and turned his ear to the whirl of his cotton spindles, he was still attracted by the capital. In Washington were formed national policies regarding trade; in Washington was determined military strategy, ranging from grand marches upon Richmond to small forays into cotton country; in Washington were men like Harris Hoyt, men of strange talents and strange designs. Business would never submit to the confines of state boundaries. In Washington Sprague would have opportunities to widen his power to serve the broad demands of his interests. The Rhode Island legislature had obliged by electing him to the United States Senate.

Before he took his seat in March, 1863, Sprague came to the capital to see Kate as often as he came on business, and he noticed with pleasure that other men looked on enviously when he escorted her to a party or helped her into a barouche. Sprague was a slight, near-sighted man with only passing good looks, and he had fought a long battle against insignificance. Money had bought him power, but it was respect he wanted. For a while it had seemed that courage and battle were to bring it to him; but when time revealed that he was not made of the stuff of military leaders, Sprague found consolation in the attention of Kate, irresistible Kate, "the prettiest Kate in Christendom," tall, graceful, her small Greek head borne royally, her lovely, piquant face untouched by care or sorrow, her exquisite dark eyes, with their heavily fringed lids, full of a certain entangling charm."⁶ She had won the capital; and, to Sprague's astonishment, he found that somehow he had won her.

Sprague was ten years older than Kate. He had traveled extensively in Europe and, by the time he took his seat in the Senate, had served three terms as governor of Rhode Island. But in spite of all his advantages over the young girl of twenty-two, fresh from Ohio and a New York finishing school, Sprague did not feel superior to her. Youth is no handicap for the beautiful; and Kate, appropriating her father's worldly wisdom as her own, had not needed to wait for time

to serve her with experience. Sprague may have been born into immense wealth; but Kate Chase had been born into the elect, and from her childhood she had possessed an almost mystical self-assurance, which neither money nor liquor nor travel nor politics had brought William Sprague. Kate had the cool self-possession of a goddess whose will determines the course of destiny. Sprague's very temerity revealed his weakness.

Their temperaments were poles apart. Kate was restless, vivacious, electric; Sprague was a sluggish, diffident young man, drained of life and animation except for rare bursts of audacity, often kindled by alcohol. Kate was domineering and headstrong. People thought Sprague dull and phlegmatic, and few would have wagered much for his career if he had not had money. Sprague was not troubled by the differences in his and Kate's personalities. After his father's death, he had grown up in a household ruled by a strong woman—his mother Fanny Sprague. In many ways Kate was like her.

Their courtship was not smooth; but, whatever the trouble between the two during the fall of 1862, it was all washed away with the spring rains. Kate accompanied her father to New York for a short trip on a new government cruiser, and William Sprague was among the distinguished company of wealthy Easterners who went along. One of the beautiful young heiresses came home in high rage. "Kate Chase and Senator Sprague were on board, and Kate got the Senator in one corner of the ship and kept him entirely to herself," she exclaimed indignantly. "I don't see what there is to admire in that girl."⁷

In May crusty old Gideon Welles wrote in his diary: "Governor Sprague and Miss Kate called this evening. I have been skeptical as to a match, but this means something." Finally, after a courtship of two years, Kate Chase and William Sprague IV were engaged. They were to be married in the fall, "if they both live and don't change their minds," Chase wrote Jay Cooke.⁸

As the spring days lengthened and the crocuses and violets blossomed, all Washington watched Kate and discussed her engagement. Not all of the comment was flattering. She had many obvious assets; Sprague had only one—his money—and now his gold glittered con-

spicuously. It could be a brilliant match, their friends argued. Sprague was immensely wealthy and at the age of thirty-three a United States Senator. Perhaps all that he lacked for an illustrious political career was a wife like Kate — a celebrated political hostess, shrewd and resourceful. As Gideon Welles once said, "She is beautiful or, more properly perhaps, interesting and impressive. . . . Few young men have such advantages as he, and Miss Kate has talents and ambition sufficient for both." ⁹

Friends and enemies suspected that the marriage would have a bearing on another political career — that of Salmon P. Chase. In less than a year Republicans were to meet to select their candidate for the Presidency in 1864. Of Lincoln's big rivals in 1860, only Chase still offered a formidable challenge. It was plain that he considered himself *the* alternative, and equally plain that many powerful factions agreed. It was also obvious that a marriage alliance with Sprague's millions could provide Chase with the means to win those political factions still in doubt. The Senator could also be counted on for critical political influence in New England, where Chase's candidature needed support.

Kate's engagement had an immediate effect upon the relationship between Chase and Jay Cooke. Once the slight tremors in Congress subsided, they had resumed their pleasant relationship of give and take. Cooke was astonished, therefore, when he arrived at his office one day in June, 1863, to find a check for \$4200, profit from a stock transaction, returned by Chase. He could not accept dividends on stocks that he had not bought, explained the Secretary severely, nor, for that matter, did he feel he could properly engage in *any* stock transactions while Secretary of the Treasury. "In order to be able to render most efficient service to our country it is essential for me to *be* as well as *seem* right and to *seem* right as well as *be* right," he concluded loftily.¹⁰

Cooke had reason for surprise at Chase's unusually elevated tone. It had been, after all, at the Secretary's own suggestion that Cooke had begun underwriting his lavish mode of life; and never before had Chase objected to the banker's methods. Was fear of congressional criticism still making him shy? Cooke may have wondered. Or had Kate's engagement to millionaire William Sprague, announced two

weeks before, enabled him to embrace a standard of righteousness he could ill have afforded before?

Cooke tactfully voiced agreement with his friend's "noble sentiments"; but, leaving the way open for a change in the moral climate, he added, "The money don't belong to me. I shall lay it aside for future consideration."¹¹

For almost a week no letters marked "private" went from the Secretary of the Treasury to Jay Cooke, but the banker had been wise to set aside the profits. Chase was as comfortable in his new resolve as an angel on the head of a pin, and in a few days he descended from his pinnacle to request that Cooke lend a thousand dollars to a political friend and invest some money for a poor relative.¹² Cooke must have smiled. If Chase would no longer avail himself of the banker's money directly, he would be free with advice on how it should be used.

For a time that spring it seemed that Chase would solve his public as well as his private financial problems. During the preceding winter Fighting Joe Hooker had replaced Burnside as commander of the Army of the Potomac. Certain that a fighting Union general would be a victorious Union general, Chase thought the end of the war imminent. So did the new commander of the army. Before going into battle in May, General Hooker announced to his staff, "My plans are perfect. . . . May God have mercy on General Lee for I will have none." But, unfortunately, Hooker's perfect plans did not take into account Lee's perfect daring. During the battle, the Union army suddenly found itself almost encircled, and it barely managed to escape across the Rappahannock and twist up through the hills of Virginia in a frantic retreat to safety. Despair thundered north from Chancellorsville, sweeping past the fleeing army, leaping over the fortifications around the capital to settle over Washington. Dispatches rained on the White House like a hail of bullets, and worried Cabinet members walked with hushed tread through its funereal halls as if the wounded lay in the East Room. All through the night Lincoln paced back and forth in his office, pondering on this latest tragedy, wondering if the Union could survive.¹³

Spring once again brought Washington fitful nightmares of South-

ern cavalry, paralyzing the city with anxiety. But spring for the Chases was a time for rejoicing. Not long after the battle Kate and her father took a brief trip to Rhode Island to meet Sprague's family and have a look at his empire; and, upon their return, she and Sprague entertained and were feted endlessly. By the end of May, seeing that Kate was near collapse, Sprague abruptly decided to go back to Rhode Island so that she could rest. Both he and Chase were becoming alarmed over her sudden poor health. As the weeks passed, she grew more and more pale and thin and irritable, as if her engagement had put her under an almost unbearable strain. For once in her life she longed for the tranquillity of the country, and she and Sprague finally set out from New York City on a river trip to Mrs. McDowell's country home near Troy. Sprague told Chase with relief that the excursion had had a good effect on her.¹⁴

In the middle of August, Kate and Nettie joined Sprague and his mother at one of the family's summer homes on Narragansett Bay; and when the beaches grew crowded, Fanny Sprague took them to Boston and Portsmouth. Chase did not begrudge Kate a gay summer, but he insisted that her vacation be as inconspicuous as possible. Publicity about her blissful social life was impolitic when most of the North was bearing an almost unendurable burden of grief and worry. Late in the summer he had to remind her to keep her name out of the newspapers; and, concerned about the expense of her excursions, he cautioned her against extravagance.¹⁵

"Please let me know what bills you are making. . . . Expense now largely overruns salary & my resources are not enough to admit of carelessness," he wrote her on the day before her twenty-third birthday.¹⁶ Three months later he would never again have to write her a similar letter. After her marriage to William Sprague IV, Kate and her father would be free.

Chase was having a far from pleasant summer. He was forced to stay in the capital to carry on the wearisome business of government finance long after "the great Bedouin camp had struck its tents for a

season," retreating from the liquid, penetrating heat that made the Federal swamp along the Potomac uninhabitable during the summer. For company there were only a few other government officials, and Chase finally allowed himself to stop occasionally at Seward's house on his way to the Treasury Department. He would find the irrepressible little Secretary of State "swinging in a hammock, which was slung upon the back porch, and smoking the inevitable cigar of portentous size,"¹⁷ but not even Seward's imperturbable good humor could raise his spirits. Chase fretted about the infrequency of Cabinet meetings, the high cost of the war, and the static Army of the Potomac, which, after the battle of Gettysburg, squatted between the Rapidan and Rappahannock rivers near Cedar Mountain. There in a land scarred by battle, the Federal and Confederate armies faced each other through the long steamy summer like two impotent old men lost in daydreams. From the West came sounds of the battle at Chickamauga, but in Washington in late July there was deathly stillness. A person who was shopping and vacationing could almost forget there was a war, but the Secretary of the Treasury could forget no more easily than the sweaty pickets on the Rapidan. Whether the armies fought or hibernated, they were costly; and Chase was responsible for paying for them.

Becoming increasingly testy about the situation, Chase made it clear to all who would listen that the war was not being run according to his liking and that the country was the loser. He wrote General Hooker, who to Chase's astonishment had been demoted after his defeat at Chancellorsville: "I suppose I ought to shut my eyes and suppress my feelings, but really it is a little hard, when one *thinks* one *sees* how much might be economized of action, power, and resources, not to say something. . . ." ¹⁸ After the election in 1864, Chase hoped that his wisdom would have the sanction of the Constitution for its enactment, but during the summer of 1863, he was not President, and he was not happy.

Sensing his dissatisfaction, one of his sisters wrote him: "I do so much wish that you would get married — do — there are so many elegant ladies in and about Washington — who will make affectionate & excellent wives —" ¹⁹ Now that his daughters were almost independent,

one in school and the other soon to be married, it seemed provident to provide against loneliness by marriage.

Except for devotion to his trinity—the Presidency, his daughters, and the Negro—Salmon P. Chase was no longer a deeply emotional man; but even though death had destroyed a part of his heart, some of his sentimental feelings toward women survived. As a young man he had entered in his diary, along with the pages of pontifical self-analysis, poetry dedicated to various young ladies, poetry gilded with flowery sentiments surprising in an austere New Englander. And long after his little notebooks of poetry should have been filed away with his dusty Latin books, Chase wrote poetry, often rather bad poetry, to ladies who might become the fourth Mrs. Chase.

During the previous summer, while Kate had been at Buttermilk Farm and Saratoga, Chase had frequently called on Adele Cutts Douglas, the charming widow of his former enemy Stephen A. Douglas. Once, when she was not at home, he left as his calling card half a Treasury greenback, which had his picture on it. Mrs. Douglas returned it, saying with mock severity that she could not accept money from a gentleman. Apparently she held no resentment against Chase for his treatment of her husband years before, but their friendship was curtailed abruptly when Kate returned in September. Thereafter, Chase went riding with his daughter.²⁰

His friendship with another widow was not so easily terminated. Mrs. Eastman of Beverly, Massachusetts, sometimes spent the winter in Washington; and when she was not in the capital, she and Chase corresponded, sometimes in English, sometimes in French, a language Mrs. Eastman thought "capable of more ardor than ours." While Kate and Nettie were visiting Sprague and his mother in Rhode Island, Chase wrote his friend—the first letter he had sent her for a long time. Although she strove "to hide my feelings on the shady side," she responded warmly to his desire to see her again. About the long breach in their correspondence she remarked, "I have a feeling nowadays that my letters to you give but little satisfaction, as they can do nothing to advance the object for which it seems to me you live for—Now shall I be frank? and perhaps offend you and tell you that I am jealous! and of

whom and what, of your Ambitions and through that of yourself for don't Ambitions make the worshipper the God of his own idolatry?"²¹

"... take it for true that I *am* ambitious," Chase replied uncomfortably, but, he added, his aims were high-minded. "I will only try to direct my ambition to public acts and honorable ways. . . ." ²² Chase would try, it was true; but his friend may have wondered whether or not he would always be successful.

Chase knew that Kate disapproved of his friendship with Mrs. Eastman. She could resign herself to her marriage to William Sprague; but she was not prepared to endure her father's marriage to anyone, no matter who she might be. *His* marriage would mean an unbearable rupture in their relationship. Kate kept a vigilant watch on her father's friendship with the philosophical widow, and eventually she went so far as to intercept her letters. Mrs. Eastman was not pleased. She informed Chase tartly that, although her letters were as proper as those from "a lady abbess to the Pope . . . they are for your eyes only." She insisted that he destroy her letters after reading them, and she took the added precaution of addressing them to his office rather than to his home.²³

Actually, except during brief periods of depression, Chase did not take his friendship with Mrs. Eastman very seriously. "We must *do* our *work*," he told her gravely.²⁴ In addition to the immense responsibilities of his own department, he had voluntarily taken on a share in the others, and with government conferences starting at breakfast and lasting far into the night, he had little time to consider marriage. The truth was that time and death had turned much of the passionate devotion, once centered on Catherine Garniss, back upon its source. For years Chase had been married to the vision of himself as President of the United States. Bringing reality to that dream required the continent dedication of a priest. Chase had no fear of loneliness, for he always had Kate.

He did not seem to mind that his daughter had decided to marry, nor did he show any misgiving about the man she had chosen. It was singular that Chase was easily won to Sprague, for he had good reason to doubt the man's integrity. He had often heard on good au-

thority that Sprague had bought his governorship, but he may have been willing to ignore the story, remembering that he, too, had in a sense bought his way into public life by making a secret deal with the opposition party.²⁵ If he were unwilling to trust the word of others, Chase had ample reasons of his own to doubt Sprague's integrity after Reynolds's short but revealing service as a Treasury agent in Port Royal. But in spite of Sprague's dubious friends, Chase welcomed him into his household without hesitation.

He did not pause to consider the young man's motives when he wrote after the engagement asking for a favored position in the cotton trade. Sprague may have lost his heart to love, but he had not lost his head for business. Obviously he hoped, once he was a member of the Chase household, to link arms with the Secretary of the Treasury in making the policy of the government in regard to the Southern trade, but even before the marriage he tried to legalize the Texas Adventure. With the engagement but a month old he wrote Chase asking how to go about getting a trade permit. ". . . our policy is to get out as much cotton as we can, paying as little as possible for it," he said. "The cotton is of more value to us than money to the enemy. Affectionately yours, Wm. Sprague."²⁶

A thoughtful man might have been troubled by those words, but Chase did not ponder the implications of the letter; it was, after all, nothing more than a friendly note from his future son-in-law.

Perhaps twenty-five million dollars could buy indulgence for defects in political and business morality, but for some reason Chase was equally blind to Sprague's personal faults. Sprague, however, felt called upon to offer some explanation for the embarrassing rumors about his bachelor days. Excusing his letters ("Writing is not my trade"), he told his future father-in-law, "I deem nearly all our defects occasioned by [drinking]; and I know that in my own life whatever improprieties I may be charged with; is from this cause."²⁷

"Infirmities of nature, increased by improper remedies to assuage the disease, has made my life an excited and excentric one. I feel I have found a remedy against all this, and with good health and disposition I have more hope for . . . the future than I can have had in the past."²⁸

He could have saved himself the trouble of defending the new William Sprague; for Chase forgave him his past gladly, never pausing to consider that Sprague's weaknesses revealed something complex and dangerous.

Chase had limited standards for judging men, standards that changed little with time and experience. One of his closest friends said he was "profoundly ignorant of men. The boldest charlatan might deceive him into trusting his personal worth."²⁹ Defeats did not persuade him to abandon generals if their political views accorded with his own, nor did incompetence or corruption make him abandon political associates if they were loyal to his aspirations. A man obsessed with his own fortunes, Chase had developed a blindness to the character of others. They were no more than players in his drama; and if they served his plot, they were given their chance to speak their lines. If they did not, he tried to silence them. There were only the useful and the discarded; and when Chase found a man useful, he clung to him with a tenacious hold that refused alteration.

Sprague was wealthy; and Chase, who had never been successful in business, admired a man who knew how to make money. Chase had no son, and he was flattered by the deference Sprague paid him. Both admired Kate, and Sprague was happy to hear news of her through Chase's letters. Chase was Secretary of the Treasury, and Sprague was happy to hear him discuss the latest trade regulations. And so it was that in spite of all their differences the two were drawn together.

Genuinely fond of his future son-in-law, Chase wanted to do everything in his power to make the marriage a success. Early in June, a week after Sprague went back to Rhode Island to give Kate a rest, Chase sat down in his library to write Sprague a remarkable letter.³⁰

MY DEAR GOVERNOR,

Katie showed me yesterday your letters to her and I cannot refrain from telling you how much they delighted me. The manly affection expressed in them satisfied me that I had not given my daughter to one [who] did not fully appreciate her, or to whom she could not give the full wealth of her affections. It is said that there are fathers who wish to retain the love and duty of daugh-

ters even in larger measure [than] that [which] they shall give to their husbands. If there are I am sure I cannot be one of them. I want to have Katie honor & love you with an honor and love far exceeding any due to me and I shall feel happiest when she makes your happiness most complete.

Still I say to her as I say to you neither must expect perfection from the other. There must be trials, light certainly, perhaps great. The great will be easiest to bear. The soul prepares itself against great trials. Small ones come like surprises, taking the heart off guard. The only security against them is constant love enabled by constant respect.

He ended by saying: "Katie knows nothing of what I have written, but I shall read it to her; for, I think, the fewer issues between us there are the better."

And so Chase, who had quashed all doubts about Sprague's character, revealed that he did have misgivings about the marriage after all. Kate, not Sprague, worried him. For the first time in his life he seemed vaguely troubled by that fervent possessive attachment of Kate's that he had indulged for so many years. In his assurances to Sprague that he now bequeathed the full wealth of Kate's affections to her future husband, there was a suggestion of guilt, as if he were preparing himself to meet the reproaches of the future. He would do his best to set things aright; he would tell Kate that she must now depend on her husband rather than on him. But in his secret heart he must have known that their relationship had taken deep and hidden roots that could not easily be dislodged. He must have known that love will not be dictated to or moved by reason or legalities.

All the passions of the past rose up to resist him. For years he and Kate had been inseparable. Up until then he had been sufficient for her; and, satisfied with admiration from others, she had formed few friendships. Women found her arrogant and indifferent; men thought her charming but elusive. With her father she shared everything. Now that she was engaged she brought him her love letters.

If Kate had chosen someone more like himself, Chase might have felt fewer misgivings; but Sprague was his antithesis in appearance

and character. Chase had the Olympian form of a statesman; Sprague was slight and graceless. Chase was afire with disciplined energy; Sprague's listlessness was broken by surprising bursts of activity, sporadic and unpredictable. With monumental dignity Chase moved through life sternly recording its events in his moral ledger. For Sprague life was not a contest of great issues. He found it perplexing and inconstant, sometimes trifling, rarely worthy of more than passive interest. Chase's chief pleasure was counting his virtues. Eluding the reach of the icy conscience of New England, Sprague had been profligate and had enjoyed his sins. If Chase was troubled that Kate, who thought him the standard of perfection, had chosen William Sprague as her husband, he did not probe her motives deeply.

William Sprague never dared assume that he was to take Chase's place in Kate's heart. He saw clearly that there would be no alteration in Kate's feelings nor any parting between father and daughter. Announcing his engagement to his friends, he had said, "The Governor and Miss Katy have consented to take me into their fold. . . . Please congratulate *me*." ³¹ In answer to Chase's letter abdicating his place in Kate's affections, Sprague wrote humbly: "I think I realize the delicate link which has so long united father & daughter. I think I realize something of that high and holy relation and that I know something of the great soul of the one and its counterpart in the other. . . . My dear Sir, you will not think less of me for being in love with both these characters—I shall strive to so conduct myself to be worthy of the connection, and shall never be happier than when contributing to continue the same relation between father [and daughter] that has heretofore existed, excepting if possible to share something of it myself. . . ." ³²

Possibly Chase had known all along what the answer would be, had known that Sprague would not dare deprive him of anything, that he was, in fact, incapable of taking what Chase vowed he was willing to give.

Chase assured him, "I do not believe I shall feel easy with any household where you will not be the head." But he also knew that, unless he left Kate's house entirely and set up an independent home, he would continue to occupy the central niche in her heart and William Sprague

would be an interloper in an already sufficient household. When Kate told him of her engagement, he considered moving closer to the White House so that Lincoln could, if he desired, drop into his home instead of Seward's when he needed advice; but, after listening to Kate, Chase changed his mind. He explained to Sprague, ". . . life is short and uncertain and I am not willing to do anything that will grieve my children." ⁸³ Kate was determined. Her father would remain at Sixth and E; and Sprague, like a paying guest of a genteel rooming house, would accommodate himself to their arrangements.

By the time autumn brought relief to the parched capital, Sprague's future home had become the headquarters of an immensely complicated operation. In preparation for the wedding, Kate bought materials from Paris, gloves and bonnets from New York, the stylish new crinoline from London. Chase ordered a fine black coat, French silk grenadine vest, and black cashmere pantaloons from his tailor. In an attempt to meet expenses he sold a farm in Ohio and bore down hard on his debtors, but his efforts were in vain. On the day of Kate's wedding, he would owe over fourteen hundred dollars for her trousseau and reception, and his bank account would be overdrawn by more than a hundred dollars. ⁸⁴ Kate felt no need for frugality. If there were bills her father could not pay, William Sprague would take care of them. He was fortunate to have her at any price.

The exhausting carrousel preceding the ceremony did not deprive Kate of her self-possession. She withdrew from the confusion behind her quiet smile and her oddly aged mien of dignity; and no one, perhaps not even her father, knew what she really thought and felt. About personal matters, about her feelings toward Sprague, she said nothing. For all her love of public notice, Kate would always remain somewhat of a mystery. She chose to have people think her clever, beautiful, regal at the age of twenty-three, and they did. What more there was to Kate Chase dwelt behind a secret door for which even she may have lacked the key.

She was not devoid of emotion. Three weeks before her wedding, she had a theater date with John Hay to see *The Pearl of Savoy*. Hay found to his surprise that it "made statuesque Kate cry like a baby." ⁸⁵

But she never shed public tears over anything more touching than a well-played drama. Tenderness can be a weakness, and Kate Chase seemed to have no weaknesses.

On November 12, 1863, the street outside the Chase mansion was crowded with spectators watching the arrival of the wedding guests — military heroes, members of the Cabinet, the diplomatic corps, politicians, and leaders of capital society.³⁶ A continuous line of carriages inched along E Street; and by the time Lincoln arrived, tired and unescorted, the square in front of the house was completely blocked. The President's heart was hardly light enough to join the gaiety that night. The loss of his own son had sharpened his sensitivity to the cost of war; and always, no matter where he might be, a part of his mind was with the men on the battlefield. A few days after Kate's wedding, he would go up to Gettysburg to make a short dedication speech at a cemetery filled with lost sons.

Prolonged mourning kept Mrs. Lincoln from accompanying her husband to Kate's triumph, or so it was said. Now that her desperation had dulled into sadness, the First Lady prepared for mourning with taste as fastidious as Kate's in preparing for marriage. She, too, incessantly consulted her seamstresses about her gowns; and she, too, insisted that she have the finest, the lightest, the "gentleest & tastiest" that could be made.³⁷ The difference was that Kate chose white velvet and Mrs. Lincoln chose black crepe.

The wedding guests assembled in the rear room of the double parlor, brilliantly festooned with the national colors. At eight-thirty the folding doors separating the two rooms were thrown open, revealing the bridal party standing before a temporary altar; and in a short ceremony William Sprague IV and Kate Chase, the two high contracting parties, were joined in marriage as securely as money and politics could bind them. Under the circumstances it was singularly fitting that Kate was given in marriage by her father.

Afterward there was a short silence; and then, before the groom had an opportunity, Salmon P. Chase came forward to kiss the bride. The crowd was soon swelled from fifty to five hundred as lesser notables began arriving for the reception. From the alcove at the back of the

parlor the Marine Band struck up the "Kate Chase Wedding March," composed especially for the occasion; and in the dining room Kate led the dancing with R. C. Parsons, who had introduced her to Sprague three years before. After the quadrilles, refreshments were served on the second floor, a sumptuous banquet rivaling Maillard's creations for Mrs. Lincoln's party the previous year.³⁸

Four blocks away at Ford's Theater was being performed a play entitled *Money*, a comedy produced by the brilliant young actor John Wilkes Booth, based on the question of whether love should be given to money or to the man.³⁹ John Hay and Kate Chase were not at the theater that evening, and so Hay would never know how Kate would have liked the comedy. He was at the wedding, however; and afterward he wrote in his diary: "Kate looked tired out and languid especially at the close of the evening when I went in to the bridal chamber to say good night. She had lost all her old severity and formal stiffness of manner, & seemed to think she had *arrived*." ⁴⁰

The marriage of the nation's richest Senator to the capital's most beautiful belle was trumpeted from the front pages of newspapers throughout the North. The most spectacular affair held in Washington during Lincoln's administration, they proclaimed. One reporter remarked, "Who was there and who was not there; how the bride looked in her white velvet dress, real point lace veil and orange flowers . . . how Mrs. Lincoln did not go because she is yet in black wear and an opportune chill betimes; how the President stayed two hours and a half 'to take the cuss off' the meagerness of the Presidential party; how the bride wore a 'tiara' of pearls and diamonds, the like of which was never seen in America since the days of the Aztec 'barbaric pearl and gold' . . . how the victuals and drink were lavish . . . all of these things are good for Washington gossip, and the National Village is yet agitated." ⁴¹

A few newspapers condemned the spectacle as a discordant festivity in wartime; and one, in an acid editorial entitled "Wail of the Workwomen," made an unkind comparison of life at Sixth and E streets with life on the east side of New York City where Kate's lace was fashioned by seamstresses whose salaries were two dollars a week. But for

the most part the press, fed from the flowing spring of Treasury-bond advertising, muted its criticism; and the public, reading about the ceremony and Kate's trousseau and wedding gifts, escaped for a moment from the tolls of Gettysburg and the ominous shifting of armies in the wilderness. President Lincoln had sent the bride an exquisite little fan, it was said; and the wedding gifts, assessed at over one hundred thousand dollars, "broke the record for all recent American weddings." William Sprague had been most generous of all to his bride, for it was he who put the crown of diamonds and pearls on her head. The young girl had come a long way. Two and a half years after she had appeared in Washington with no more than a flower in her hair, her jewelry was sketched in *Harper's* for the entire country to admire.⁴²

The press continued to stare with unblinking eyes as the wedding party, including the groomsmen, bridesmaids, and many of Sprague's relatives, set out on a short trip to New York, where the bride and groom were to be at the mercy of their many friends, eager to entertain them. To the dismay of the curious ladies of that city, the Spragues left almost immediately. Friends of the happy couple were sympathetic; for, on the night before Kate and her husband made their hasty departure, their hotel caught on fire twice.⁴³ By the time the second blaze was under control, they had had enough of honeymooning in New York, and they left immediately for Sprague's home in Providence.

If they were seeking privacy there, they were to be disappointed. Sprague's mother Fanny had arranged a homecoming celebration for her son and his bride. Over the entrance of the house on Orchard Street was hung an emblem representing the banners of all nations, the porch was a canopy of flags and streamers, and over the front gate on a special arch were the words WELCOME HOME, emblazoned in gilt on a black background. Alice Skinner, a member of the bridal party, wrote her uncle Salmon Chase in amusement: "The large appearance of the decorations as seen from the street gave one the idea that it was intended to make the happy pair feel a kind of rapturous emotion of welcome. Oh! It was very funny. Gen'l — suggested preparations for a *horse fair*." ⁴⁴

Kate was not amused. The gaudy welcome to Rhode Island broke

her endurance, strained by the hectic flight to New York, by the endless dreary lines of staring people, the parties, receptions, and hotel fires. She had left her Olympian father for this — a garish nightmare of red, white, and blue streamers.

Alice assured her uncle that "much time was spent in tearing [the decorations] down for they were too overwhelming to be allowed to remain. . . ." Sprague's report to his father-in-law was more guarded. "The reception passed off quite brilliantly. . . . Katie was a little fatigued at the commencement but as progress was made she was herself again."⁴⁵

After the welcoming party, a local newspaper commented: "We fervently trust that the late hour to which festivities were protracted, is emblematic of the prolonged and blissful life of the newly wedded pair." No oracles looking for signs portending the future of the young couple noticed that within the week there was a total eclipse of the moon.⁴⁶

The spectacle at the Sprague mansion spelled the finish to the week of public festivities for the bridal party, and shortly afterward Sprague and Kate were free to set off alone on their honeymoon trip to Ohio, where Kate displayed the Boy Senator to her old friends. Many Westerners, while envying Kate's good fortune in acquiring millions along with a husband, did not rejoice for her. She had not been popular as Ohio's first hostess, and unpleasant stories about her brief reign survived her departure to Washington and would persist to be recorded long after her death. It was said that she had thrown stones at boys passing by the Chase house on their way to school, that in a flare of temper she had insulted the members of a ladies' benevolent society and had contemptuously ignored some sacred customs regarding the relationship between married men and unmarried women.⁴⁷ Kate enjoyed the opportunity to flaunt her wealth and position in the faces of people who had once called her Kate the Shrew.

One Ohio newspaper took revenge by printing a dirty thumbnail sketch of the bridegroom for the entertainment of its readers. The Senate was warned to expect little of its gilded newcomer. "He will make no speeches for he neither writes nor talks; he will not contribute to

the dignity of the Senate, for he is small, thin, and unprepossessing in appearance; he will vote regularly and just as Papa Chase tells him. . . ." ⁴⁸

Knowing that money has a peculiar eloquence, Sprague was not much worried about his future in the Senate. But the newspaper touched on some of his weaknesses that gave him shivers of fear about his new marital responsibilities. Whereas money could make a marriage, it could not make happiness, he knew. Two days after the wedding he had written Chase: "[Katie] is I think very happy, and I cannot but admit that it gave me great happiness and satisfaction in knowing that she fares thus in my hands." But after almost a month of marriage, Sprague was less optimistic. Kate fell very ill with a cold in Ohio, and Sprague had to report to her father that she was recovering slowly. "You know she is very tenacious of everything." He added: "I am delighted that you see a brighter future for us. As I have known that you troubled a little for . . . a solution of that which was to come. . . . With God on our side and the ever watchful eye & council of one so dearly loved we share with you in feeling that misfortune can never come, tho trials may." ⁴⁹

Tho trials may! There had stolen into both Sprague's and Chase's mind the unwelcome thought that the future would not always be bright. That shadow, instead of fading away in the first happy months of marriage, had swollen up into words. Had Kate and Sprague a solution for that which was to come? Sprague seemed strangely troubled for a cotton king and national legislator. Battlefield courage would not sustain him for the long test ahead. He was glad that he had a father standing by. He would need him.

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CHAPTER VI

The Bluebottle Fly

BY THE time he married Kate Chase, William Sprague was running the icy currents of treason. The Texas Adventure, the plan to run Texas cotton through the blockade to his mills in Rhode Island, was in full operation.

In December, 1862, Harris Hoyt, that breezy, loyal Union man of Texas, had sailed to Mexico and slipped across the Rio Grande into Texas with his contraband cargo. Setting up headquarters in Houston, he busied himself selling his arms and ammunition to the Confederate army, establishing a cotton factory, and buying up cotton to send to Matamoras. There his partners had stationed an agent to arrange for its transshipment in British ships to the North.¹

Everything went well for a time, and by July, 1863, the venture had provided its backers with high-grade cotton worth one hundred thousand dollars on the New York market. But at the end of the month, when the moon was full, one of Hoyt's ships, the *America*, got caught by the Union blockade en route to Mexico.² Although there were no papers aboard to implicate A. and W. Sprague and Company, William Sprague, then vacationing in New England with his mother and fiancée, had occasion to reflect on the dangerous course upon which he had embarked. He and his partners had to be careful.

About two weeks after the capture of the *America*, the indestructible Harris Hoyt arranged the biggest deal the Texas Adventurers could have hoped for. From Milkcan, Texas, headquarters of Major General J. B. Magruder, came the announcement that Harris Hoyt had entered into a contract to supply the Confederate army with arms and ammunition. In exchange, military authorities were to accord him exemp-

tion from impressment for two thousand bales of cotton (worth approximately seven hundred fifty thousand dollars) and the necessary wagons, teams, and drivers to transport the cotton to the coast. He was to be allowed those privileges only *after* he delivered ten thousand stand of rifles to the army. Hoyt actually had nothing like ten thousand rifles; but, promising that he would return immediately with the arms, he managed to persuade General Magruder to let him out of Texas with his cotton anyway. In two weeks Hoyt had his incredibly rich haul at the port of Galveston; and the general, not suspecting that he meant to break his part of the bargain, issued a permit for him to go to sea.

Unfortunately, Hoyt was not discriminating in his choice of friends. Unexpectedly a special military order went out from Houston summoning witnesses, including a woman, from Sour Lake, Texas, to testify about his plans. Hoyt was clapped into jail, an indignity that would serve him in the future as evidence of his unswerving devotion to the Union. A man who could always talk himself out of a corner, Hoyt managed to elude General Magruder's grasp; and by the end of October, two weeks before Sprague married Kate, he was safe in Matamoras, his contract with the Confederates tucked in his pocket. Nothing remains to betray whether or not more than a fraction of the fabulous two thousand bales of cotton ever got to William Sprague. Much later, under circumstances casting doubt on his truthfulness, Hoyt insisted that he burned all of it.⁸

Gideon Welles, for one, was painfully aware of the lively trade between Northern ports and Matamoras, and he had become irked with the way Salmon P. Chase tried to shrug off all responsibility for it. Early in the spring he had written Chase that there were about two hundred ships "having regular clearances from Northern ports [clearances granted by Chase's Treasury Department] off the mouth of the Rio Grande, waiting to discharge their cargoes and receive cotton," and had urged him to work out some method of checking the illicit trade; but Chase, preoccupied with politics and the romance in his household, had paid no attention. In November, about the time of Kate's wedding, Chase received an urgent plea from an American resident of Mat-

amoras to send a secret agent to that village to find out what Americans were trading with the enemy, but the Secretary of the Treasury was still too busy to give the matter serious attention.⁴

In January, 1864, when Hoyt returned North, the principals of the Texas Adventure held a conference to consider their next move. In the short time the Texan had been South, he and his agents had channeled to their partners cotton worth over two hundred thousand dollars. Expenses, including the loss of one of their ships that sank outside New York Harbor, had been close to one hundred twenty-five thousand dollars, leaving a profit of sixty per cent on their investment. By the beginning of 1864, however, the trading operation threatened to cost far more than the price of ships and cargo. There was a dangerous possibility that a congressional investigation would expose the venture to Union officials and the public.⁵

The navy had found goods on blockade runners indicating that the officials of the New York Customhouse, where the ships had been cleared, had been guilty of "collusion with unprincipled shippers and blockade runners." Improper management of the Treasury bonding system was permitting blockade runners to use New York as the center of a gigantic sea-borne traffic with the South, a House committee concluded. ". . . each bale of cotton [run through the blockade] costs twenty coffins," thundered one Congressman.⁶

Fortunately for Sprague, the committee failed to connect him with the cases of improper bonding. Discovery could have cost him his political future, his marriage, perhaps even his life. Possibly it would cost Salmon P. Chase the Presidency.

As far as Chase was concerned, the results of the investigation were bad enough, fragmentary though they were; for as Secretary of the Treasury he was held responsible for the customhouses and the bonding system. Despite the furor in Congress and the pressure of the President, Chase refused to fire the man he had put in charge of the New York Customhouse. A powerful Chase partisan, Hiram Barney was in charge of the largest single nerve center in the Secretary's political machine; he lent Chase as much as five thousand dollars, managed his New York real estate, and was a close associate of William Sprague.

Surely he was too good a friend to be sacrificed; and when Lincoln persisted in demanding that he go, Chase got his way by threatening to resign.⁷

Chase had, he thought, long ago established his undisputed sovereignty over Treasury personnel. In principle he admitted that the right of appointment belonged to the President, but in practice he insisted that it belonged to him and him alone. And not satisfied with control of the more than ten thousand officeholders in his own department, Chase meddled in the patronage of others on the twin assumptions that Ohio, having one eighth of the country's population, deserved one eighth of the Federal jobs and that he, as Ohio's favorite son, should have a hand in dispensing them.⁸

When Secretary Seward refused to let him have a voice in Ohio's share of the State Department, Chase wrote him ominously: "I have not thought it respectful to go to the President about appointments in your department . . . others do and it seems not unsuccessful." Mr. Bates, another of Chase's colleagues in the Cabinet, thought that Chase was going too far. "I'm afraid Mr. Chase's head is turned by his eagerness in pursuit of the Presidency," he observed. "For a long time back he has been filling all the offices in his own vast patronage, with extreme partisans, and contrives also to fill many vacancies, properly belonging to other departments."⁹

At the beginning of his administration Chase had set down his maxim regarding appointments: "the public first, our friends next." But when he promptly replaced ninety customhouse collectors with his own men, it became clear that he had so many friends that they constituted a public in themselves.¹⁰ Chase had come into office with his political creditors hot on his heels, and he had not treated them unkindly. By putting them in office he put them in *his* debt, a debt to be canceled only by equal devotion to the collection of revenue and the promotion of his presidential aspirations. From New Orleans to New York Chase's army of mercenaries wrote him in counterpoint — public letters about finance and private letters about politics. From New Orleans came word of a Chase-for-President organization flourishing under

the watchful eye of the customhouse; from the West came news of the current editorial sentiment; from the East, reports on the effect of financial policies on Chase's popularity. Especially favored Treasury appointees, like Hiram Barney, Jay Cooke, and others, also wrote private letters about Chase's personal financial affairs, the management of which they assumed along with their public duties.¹¹

As the time for the Republican convention neared, these partisans launched a merciless guerrilla warfare against the President. One of Lincoln's friends, tracing the slanderous whispering campaign against Mrs. Lincoln to Chase's men, declared bitterly, "I regard it as an outrage upon all propriety and common decency to continue men in office who use their position and influence continually, to depreciate the President and his family."¹²

Hay finally warned the President that Chase's friends were making trouble and said that he thought Lincoln should not make himself *particeps criminis* by approving all of Chase's appointments. Lincoln only laughed off Chase's "mad hunt after the Presidency" and remarked that he knew his Secretary, "like the bluebottle fly, [will] lay his eggs in every rotten spot he can find." But, he added dryly, "I have decided to shut my eyes, as far as possible, to everything of the sort. Mr. Chase makes a good Secretary and I shall keep him where he is. If he becomes President, all right, I hope we may never have a worse man. . . ."

Hay concluded despondently that the President preferred "letting Chase have his own way in these sneaking tricks than getting into a snarl with him by refusing him what he asks." But the truth was that Lincoln was only being patient until, as one Congressman put it, "the pear [was] ripe. . . ."¹³ The President wanted to make certain that when the final break came, Chase would not take with him a majority of the party and the presidential nomination as well. Therefore, he had to wait until he had a few more cards in his hand before forcing the issue.

Chase unwittingly played Lincoln's game. It was true, as Hay and Nicolay said, that he "gave his confidence freely to anyone who came

flattering him and criticizing the President, and after having given it, it was almost impossible to make him believe that the man who talked so judiciously could be a knave.”¹⁴ Unfortunately, this credulity often got him into serious trouble.

While disclosures about the New York Customhouse were embarrassing him, a scandal broke in Ohio that threatened to destroy the Cookes, in whose hands he had placed the trust of his department and a large bond issue of the government. That irrepressible entrepreneur, Henry D. Cooke, got himself involved in a conspiracy to defraud the government by misappropriating quartermaster supplies in Ohio and in the course of the venture compromised Chase by getting him to use his influence in behalf of one of the guilty partners. Although Chase knew nothing about Cooke's intentions, he was saved from disgrace only by the heavy-handed action of the Secretary of War in suppressing the scandal.¹⁵

Henry Cooke's indiscretions did not persuade Chase to discard him and his brother any more than the customhouse scandal persuaded him to fire Barney. They had, after all, earned some forbearance. By the spring of 1863, Jay Cooke and Company had sold over one hundred forty million dollars' worth of government bonds, and sales continued to mount. To manage his immense financial operations, Jay Cooke had brought into being a powerful, far-reaching network of subagents—all sincerely interested in the fortunes of themselves, the Treasury Department, and Salmon P. Chase.¹⁶ Those men developed an extraordinary sensitivity to public opinion as they grazed about the grass roots of the political hinterland; and from the far reaches of the country Chase and Cooke received a steady flow of reports on how the bonds were selling and, equally important, how Chase was selling.

To enhance the popularity of both, the press was enlisted. Cooke put aside one third of his commission for advertising, and nearly every newspaper in the North at one time or another carried a patriotic ad calling upon the people to subscribe to the government bonds. There was a temptation for editors to smile on the source of those lucrative advertisements; and, as newspapers throughout the land spread the good news of Chase's financial genius, the unglamorous business of govern-

ment finance suddenly began to vie with the movement and fate of armies for public attention. It seemed that victory, instead of being in the hands of the army and navy, was assured by the clear-sighted patriot in the Treasury Department. One of Chase's Cabinet colleagues observed resentfully, ". . . Mr. C[hase] attributes the salvation of the country to his own *admirable financial system*, quite as intelligibly, but in language not quite as plain as Cicero's — who swore, 'By the immortal gods, I have saved my country.' " ¹⁷

Although Jay Cooke was no longer called upon to subsidize Chase's private life, he was expected to pay the lion's share of his political bills; and by convention time the Cookes had sunk almost ninety thousand dollars in Chase's public career. One item in this total was money spent for copies of a thinly disguised campaign biography of the Treasury Secretary, which first appeared in a magazine full of cheap patent-medicine advertising. Although warned by friends that the venture was in bad taste and would have unpleasant consequences, Chase did nothing to prevent the publication.¹⁸

When Lincoln wrote him a curt request for an explanation of those unbecoming machinations, Chase replied with pious irritation that he had not influenced anyone to subscribe to the sketch.

"You will pardon me if I write as one somewhat moved. It makes me hate public life when I realize how powerless are the most faithful labors and the most upright conduct to protect any man from carping envy, or malignant denunciations, and how little he can expect, even from the best and most intelligent men, when such noises prevail. It is almost painful to think how little friends are disposed to bear with the mistakes and inadvertencies of other friends, and how ready to make me responsible for them as well as my own." ¹⁹

Knowing what political use Chase was making of the Treasury and Cooke machines, Lincoln could persuade himself to feel little pity for his poor, maligned Secretary. Chase's cloak of injured innocence was growing threadbare; as time went on, Lincoln had more and more reasons to suspect that the little "inadvertencies" of Chase's friends were not altogether outside his control.

The biography was only the latest in a long series of Chase's centripe-

tal activities which, no matter how various and impersonal they seemed on the surface, always turned back upon himself. To put himself in the White House, Chase had first to put himself in the people's mind; and as the political pulse of the country quickened in anticipation of the nomination conventions, he began to offer the public handsomely wrought images of himself — biographies, eulogies of his financial system, portraits, posters, newspaper editorials, speeches. Frequently he went to photographers' studios to sit for portraits, and he found time from his pressing public duties to sit for a plaster bust of himself, to be redone in marble at the expense of his Treasury employees. He spent hours writing relatives and friends for material about his early life for a man in Boston who was preparing a biography for boys and girls, a book Chase hoped would not be uninteresting to people of voting age. He sent off sketches of himself to this magazine and that magazine — pompous autobiographies of a noble statesman, upright, dignified, brilliant. As one of his enemies said: "He evolved forty ways of saying what he wrote a Wisconsin man in December of '63: 'There is certainly a purpose to use my name, and I do not feel bound to object to it.'"²⁰

When the Treasury Department began printing greenbacks, or paper money, the face of Salmon P. Chase, not George Washington or Abraham Lincoln, graced the one-dollar bill. A campaign picture in every man's pocket! Chase smiled modestly and explained, "I had put the President's head on the higher priced notes, and my own, as was becoming, on the smaller ones."²¹

To a man of Chase's priggish formality the manners of a handshaking politician did not come easily. Probably he would have preferred to become President in a vacuum; but lacking that opportunity, he set himself to fit the American electoral system with characteristic thoroughness. Amid much ballyhoo he went off to Ohio to vote in the autumn elections. There the Olympian Mr. Chase unfroze. He became a popular hero, making a whistle-stop tour through Ohio, greeted everywhere by torchlight parades and crowded city squares. The man who had always chilled his associates into uneasy formality joked with the shouting crowds, who affectionately dubbed him "Old Greenbacks."

Back in Washington Edward Bates, Lincoln's Attorney General, tugged at his beard with irritation at Chase's antics. "That visit to the West is generally understood as Mr. Chase's opening campaign for the Presidency," he fussed. Another of Lincoln's friends said angrily that "if Chase would pay a little attention to his damned old paper mill in Washington instead of running around the country electioneering, the finances of the country would be better off."²²

Lincoln recognized Chase's lusting after the Presidency as a "mild insanity," but for the time being he thought it safer to have Chase in the Cabinet than out of it, where his attacks on the administration could be direct and unrestrained.²³ And insofar as Chase's ambition made him work at being a good Secretary of the Treasury, Lincoln stood to gain. Chase's ambition reminded him of a story, Lincoln told his friends. Back in Illinois neighbors watched a man plow for a long time with a horse plagued by a gadfly. Finally, unable to hold back their curiosity any longer, they asked, "Why don't you kill the fly?"

"Let her buzz," said the farmer. "It keeps the horse alert and active about his work."²⁴

Mrs. Lincoln, who did not have to consider the trying problems of balancing the Cabinet between moderates and Radicals, was not as charitable toward Chase as her husband seemed to be; and she finally decided to take matters into her own hands. Resolved that she, for one, was not going to assist Chase's entrance into the White House under any circumstances, she omitted the names of Chase, Kate, and Sprague from her list when planning an official dinner for the Cabinet. Nicolay noticed the omissions and took the matter up with the President, who ordered the names restored to the list at once. "Whereat there arose such a rampage as the House hasn't seen in a year," Nicolay recalled. Outraged at his interference, Mrs. Lincoln told the secretary that she would plan the dinner without his help and that, furthermore, she would make certain that he was not invited. One of Lincoln's other secretaries who had been a persistent admirer of Mrs. Lincoln "fairly cowered at the volume of the storm, and I think for the first time begins to appreciate the awful sublimities of nature," Nicolay said.

On the afternoon of the party Mrs. Lincoln called in Nicolay to apol-

ogize. She had been so upset by the incident, she said, that she had not slept for two nights. "I think she has felt happier since she cast out that devil of stubbornness," Nicolay told John Hay.²⁵

Lincoln liked Chase little better than his wife, but he knew that the time was not right for a showdown. People in the North were dissatisfied with the way the war was going, and the President's standing with his party was not good. Even the victory at Gettysburg had not served to restore his popularity. Lincoln told the story of a powerful Congressman who was asked on the day of the dedication of the cemetery where the President and Secretary of State were going.

"To Gettysburg," he replied shortly.

"But where are Stanton and Chase?"

"At home, at work," snapped the Congressman. "Let the dead bury the dead."²⁶

Politics had only served to make Lincoln's position worse. In spite of a Radical victory at the polls in the fall, he defied demands that the South be delivered up to the righteous indignation of Congress, and instead laid down his program for the swift reconciliation of North and South. When mutinous Radicals gathered in angry knots of opposition, one observer wrote: "As to the politics of Washington, the most striking thing is the absence of personal loyalty to the President. It does not exist. He has no admirers, no enthusiastic supporters, none to bet on his head."²⁷

As Chase began his undisguised campaign for the party nomination, the President grew increasingly worried about the threat to his policies and his political future. ". . . I don't quite forget that I was nominated for President in a convention that was two-thirds for the other fellow," he said.²⁸

Hay wrote gloomily: ". . . politicians are strong yet and [Lincoln] is not 'their kind of cat.'"²⁹

Mrs. Lincoln thought her husband "too honest to take the proper care of his own interests," but she and Hay were wrong in thinking him no match for the politicians, including Salmon P. Chase.³⁰

One night Lincoln stayed late in his White House office to discuss the political crisis with his friend Alexander K. McClure. Over and over

again he reviewed his situation and weighed each element that might prove decisive. When McClure rose to go, Lincoln followed him to the end of the table used for Cabinet meetings, where he and Chase had had many arguments, and, swinging one of his long legs over it, made himself comfortable, and went on talking.

"By the way, McClure," he said finally, "how would it do if I were to decline Chase?"

"Why, Mr. Lincoln, how could that be done?" asked McClure puzzled.

Lincoln said he was reminded of the story of two Democrats electioneering in Illinois. To avoid making each other mad, they finally agreed that each could say anything about the other without arousing resentment. When the election returns came in, one of the two was surprised to find that the area he had counted on to carry him into office had returned a large majority for his opponent. Hurrying over to his opponent's headquarters for an explanation, he learned that the winner had taken the liberty of announcing to the crucial district that the other candidate had retired from the contest.⁸¹

McClure chuckled and said good night.

Lincoln, however, had not meant merely to amuse. He was forming a plan to decline Chase, a plan somewhat more subtle than the Illinois Democrat's, but one that might prove just as effective.

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CHAPTER VII

Forgive Us Our Friends

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was not without friends determined that he was to be re-elected President. A few months before the Republican convention Chase had the Cookes, the Treasury machine, and the Radicals in his camp. Abraham Lincoln had the Blairs, and with complete confidence he turned over to them the privilege of declining his rival. Lincoln knew that he was brewing a storm; but he could fold his long bony fingers over his knee, lean back in his chair, and smile. As one of the Blairs once said, when they went in for a fight, they went in for a funeral.¹

At the outbreak of the war they had served Lincoln by tipping the scales toward the Union in two critical border states—in Missouri, where Frank Blair, Jr., was a formidable political power, and in Maryland, where Montgomery Blair and his father stood side by side. Appointed Lincoln's Postmaster General, Montgomery Blair energetically took up the President's fight against the Radicals. He was a distinguished lawyer with a hard, practical mind, "an anvil for ideas to be hammered on." Fiercely loyal to Lincoln, he soon collided with Chase and found his ideas and company equally distasteful. By the autumn of Kate's marriage they were scarcely speaking. Chase noted sullenly that Blair was the only Cabinet member who did not attend his daughter's wedding.²

Montgomery was the Blairs' infantry, advancing slowly and steadily, his position always clear, a man to be relied upon for the day-to-day fight to preserve Lincoln's policies. His younger brother Frank was the cavalry, poised to swoop down upon the enemy suddenly to deliver the deadly blow. A tall, powerful man with a ruddy complexion and drooping mustache, he was fiery and magnetic, an adventurer imbued

with the romance of the West. When war broke out, he successfully fought off secessionist movements in Missouri, came to Washington to serve briefly in the first war Congress, and, after helping push through the bills necessary to establish the army, went off to fight the Confederates in the field.³ In January, 1864, Frank Blair left the army and came to Washington to take a seat in Congress. He arrived at the time Lincoln complained to Chase about the campaign biography and received in reply his Secretary's sad musings about the injustice of being held responsible for the "mistakes and inadvertencies" of his friends. A few days later Blair began his second congressional term by demanding an investigation of the Treasury Department, and only the vigorous objections of the Radicals killed the resolution. Rumors that Blair had come to Washington at the President's request undoubtedly heightened Chase's irritation over the incident. A few months before, to Chase's rage, Blair, after conferring privately with the President, had made a sensational speech in Missouri, charging that the Treasury Secretary was using his control of trade permits to favor his friends and buy the Presidency.⁴

As Lincoln's friends began their campaign to embarrass Chase, Chase's friends were feverishly working underground to force the issue of the Republican presidential nomination once and for all. A committee was formed to secure the honor for Chase. Its chairman was Samuel C. Pomeroy, "an unctuous and sleek man, with a rosy countenance and a suave manner," who had been sent to the Senate in a fraudulent Kansas election. The Senator had once been considered a Lincoln man, but he switched to Chase when the Secretary decided that Pomeroy was justified in asking benefits for a Missouri railroad in which he had an interest.⁵

The committee gave William Sprague his first opportunity to show Kate and her father his true worth. For the sake of propriety he left the leadership to Pomeroy, but he and the Cookes were the primary financial sponsors.⁶

With his vast organization in full operation Chase became serenely confident of the infallibility of the democratic process. "So far as the Presidency is concerned, I must leave that wholly to the people," he

said. "Whatever disposition they make of it, I shall be content." To his former law partner he exulted, "I cannot help being gratified by the preference expressed for me in some quarters; for those who express it are generally men of great weight, and high character, and independent judgment. . . ." ⁷

The first issue of Chase's high-minded friends was an anonymous circular savagely attacking the President, who, it was said, was plotting to set up a dictatorship and was dragging out the war so that the country would re-elect him rather than change leaders in midstream. "The cant about 'Honest Old Abe' was at first amusing, it then became ridiculous, but now it is absolutely criminal. . . . Who cares for the honesty of the President unless he be capable; it is not honesty but capacity that is wanted." ⁸ Salmon P. Chase was the capable, if not necessarily honest, alternative to Lincoln that the authors had in mind; but they did not mention him. The first move was to strike a blow at the President; then, when the ground was prepared, the name of Chase would be triumphantly planted.

A rumor started in Ohio that Chase and his friends were sending out secret circulars attacking Lincoln, and the *New York Herald* reported: "The glue in the Cabinet is snapping and cracking." ⁹

When the Pomeroy committee held a meeting to decide what to do next, its secretary James M. Winchell suggested that the time was right for the final plunge—the issuance of a manifesto that would, as he said, "*determine Mr. Chase's pluck and popularity.*" The committee agreed; and Winchell wrote up a circular, submitted it to the committee, and got its approval for printing and distribution.

Before the final decision, "*Mr. Chase was informed of this proposed action and approved it fully.*" He told me himself," said Winchell, "that the arraignment of the Administration . . . was one which he thoroughly indorsed and would sustain." Lord Charnwood was perhaps not entirely unfair when he characterized Chase as a "handsome, dignified and righteous person [who] was unhappily a sneak." ¹⁰

Late in February a circular, issued by a group impressively calling itself the Republican National Executive Committee, hit the front pages of newspapers throughout the North. Like the previous effort of

the Pomeroy committee, it attacked Lincoln and his "shoddy contractors" and "swarms of official leeches," but it went further in nominating a successor.

"... we find united in Hon. S. P. Chase more of the qualities needed in a President . . . than are combined in any other available candidate. His record is clean and unimpeachable, showing him to be a statesman of rare ability, and an administrator of the highest order, while his private character furnishes the surest guarantee of economy and purity in the management of public affairs. . . ." ¹¹

The trumpet had been sounded, and Chase waited expectantly for the walls of the Lincoln administration to tumble. To his surprise he found that the press response was not immediately jubilant. Most papers stuck to the President, many editors said they were relieved to hear that Chase himself had known nothing of the circular, and then, instead of rising to a crescendo sweeping Chase toward the White House, comment dwindled to an inaudible whisper. Chase's friends, seeing their crusade sputter like a match about to go out, placed another document before the public—a strong statement in behalf of the Treasury Secretary issued by the National Chase Club of Claysville, West Virginia.¹² This pitiful response from the hills of West Virginia constituted the great public clamor that Chase had been confident of receiving. There were no mass meetings, no torchlight parades, no joyful serenades at his home. The support of his Radical friends in Congress was faint. The section of the press endowed by Jay Cooke's bond advertising gave the circular full coverage, but the pebble that was to have started a tidal wave had been thrown into a void.

The private world of Mr. Chase was resilient; and, as long as Kate was at his side, it would take more than the dismal failure of the Pomeroy circular to awaken him. People were calling him embodied perfidy for his connivance with the Pomeroy committee, but his face was set hard in innocence. Deciding to volunteer an explanation to the President, Chase wrote him a hurried note, saying that he had had absolutely no prior knowledge of the circular. He admitted that some friends had talked to him about presenting his name to the country; but, he said, "I . . . told them, distinctly, that I could render them no

help, except what might come incidentally from the faithful discharge of public duties. . . .

"For yourself I cherish sincere respect and esteem; and, permit me to add, affection. . . . these sentiments [have not] been changed by assaults upon me by persons who profess themselves the special representatives of your views and policy," he added, reminding Lincoln of the indignities he had suffered at the hands of Frank Blair. "You are not responsible for acts not your own; nor will you hold me responsible except for what I do or say myself."¹³

Lincoln replied curtly that he would give Chase a full answer within a few days.

The day after Chase got Lincoln's note, Frank Blair took the floor of the House; and in a stormy speech, often shouting to be heard above hecklers, he repeated his sensational charges about Chase's political adventures and blindness to corruption, declaring that "a more profligate administration of the Treasury Department never existed under any Government; that the whole Mississippi Valley is rank and fetid with the fraud and corruption practiced there. . . ." Cotton-trading permits were being sold to the highest bidder, and Treasury agents were taking bribes, he said, but every attempt to investigate was stifled by Chase's friends, afraid of being exposed. Fortunately for Chase, Blair did not know that the Secretary had just appointed one of Pomeroy's agents to a key Treasury position in that cotton paradise, Galveston, Texas; but he knew enough of his other activities to charge that Chase was trading Treasury jobs for political support.¹⁴

Once Blair's speech had eclipsed the Pomeroy circular, Lincoln was ready to reply to Chase.

"Now, on consideration, I find there is really very little to say," he said with obvious satisfaction. ". . . I was not shocked or surprised by the appearance of the letter, because I had had knowledge of Mr. Pomeroy's committee, and of secret issues which, I supposed, came from it; and of secret agents who, I supposed, were sent out by it, for several weeks. I have known just as little of these things as my friends have allowed me to know. They bring the documents to me, but I do not

read them; they tell me what they think fit to tell me, but I do not inquire for more.

"I fully concur with you that neither of us can be justly held responsible for what our respective friends may do without our instigation or countenance; and I assure you, as you have assured me, that no assault has been made upon you by my instigation, or with my countenance." ¹⁵

Lincoln had good reason for retaining his equanimity. With the appearance of the Pomeroy circular, a flood of reproach had broken over Chase's head. William Sprague was cautiously silent during the uproar, but faithful Senator Pomeroy tried to make amends by assuring the country that the Secretary had known nothing of the action of his committee, by then unmasked as nothing more than a ragged band of Republican malcontents. In spite of his words, many people remained convinced that Chase had been the evil genius behind the circular, and Montgomery Blair, in a letter to a newspaper, went so far as to accuse him of writing it. ¹⁶

Chase decided that the only dignified course was to decline to be a presidential candidate in the hope that his withdrawal would spark a public protest, putting him back in the running. "It becomes my duty . . . and," he added grimly, "I count it more a privilege than a duty — to ask that no further consideration be given to my name." To Chase's despair he found that his backers took him at his word with visible relief. Henry D. Cooke, the political treasurer of Jay Cooke and Company, hurried off to Europe, ostensibly suffering ill health because of his strenuous efforts to sell government bonds; Jay Cooke tried to retrench his expenditures for Chase, and William Sprague suddenly quit paying his father-in-law's political bills. ¹⁷ Even the Radicals abandoned him, knowing that, for the time being at least, Chase was discredited and could no longer provide them with a successor to Lincoln. Only Chase's enemies seemed to think he was still a candidate. ¹⁸

Chase told the press coldly, "I believe that I would rather that the people should wonder why I wasn't President, than why I was." ¹⁹

March was indeed a melancholy month. Cold rain, pouring down upon Washington, turned its roads into turbulent rivers of mud and its inhabitants into gloomy specters, bowing before the winds as they

plodded to their appointed tasks through muck and fog. A Washington newspaper reported that it was the sort of weather Frenchmen chose for suicide.²⁰

Frank Blair conspired with the elements to make Chase's despair complete. His angry speech following hard upon the publication of the Pomeroy circular forced on Congress an investigation of the Treasury. Blair also furnished evidence about the Chase-Cooke relations that set off a senatorial debate on the matter. One Senator accused Jay Cooke and Company, "this rich banking firm which has been made rich by the drippings from the Treasury," of making over a million dollars out of its privileged relationship to the government. At the same time a House committee was looking into charges that Cooke had an unfair monopoly of bond sales and that his commission was excessive.²¹ While going over his records in order to refute the accusations, Chase must have congratulated himself on his insistence that the Cookes keep private and public matters distinct "so that there can be nothing on which to hang an accusation or excuse for investigation committees. . . ."

During that dreary month of March, as he faced the end of his presidential chances for another four years and prepared his answer to the polite but searching questions of the House committee, Chase had one consolation: another congressional committee was investigating Frank Blair, Jr.

For months Chase's agents had been warning him that the Treasury machine in the Mississippi Valley was being shaken by Blair's charges of corruption and favoritism.²² Not meaning to let Blair break up their profitable operations, Chase's friends planned a counterattack, with or without Chase's knowledge. Blair's spotless record did not deter them. They forged their evidence.

A few days after Blair's spectacular speech, a Congressman charged him with attacking Chase's trade regulations so that he could carry on lucrative liquor speculations. A document was produced to prove that he had already made twenty thousand dollars in illegal ventures.

Blair leaped to his feet, called his accuser "an infamous liar and scoundrel," and demanded that the House clear his name.²³ Despite the

efforts of Chase's friends, a committee was appointed to look into the charges, and the fact that the evidence against Blair was forged was established beyond doubt. When the committee presented its report, the Radicals tried to minimize its effect by suppressing debate on the issue. Blair was determined to expose the perpetrators of the forgery; and, a man not easily silenced, he was about to provide the House with a session its members would never forget.

The next day the House galleries were crowded. Rumors that Frank Blair was going to have his say had brought out most of the Senators. The Congressman surveyed the crowds with satisfaction, stood up, squared his shoulders, and plunged into his speech with gusto. Anyone who dares criticize Chase's permit system, he said, "lays himself open to assaults from the Secretary of the Treasury and all the hounds and dogs that he can set upon him, and he is to be dragged down by false charges and by forgery." The Speaker banged his gavel to call him to order, but Blair shouted over the tumult that he was leaving the House immediately, never to return, and that justice demanded that his side have a hearing.

"Go ahead! That's right!" cried his friends; and the Speaker was forced to yield the floor to him for one hour. The crowds stirred with anticipation, knowing that they were going to see the kind of fight that only a Blair could make.

Blair began by reading letters from all parts of the country charging that Chase's Treasury agents were selling trade permits on the open market. Chase's men, one writer said, "are now engaged in the most gigantic robberies of modern times, exceeding the famous operations of Clive of India." Blair declared that Jay Cooke, for one, was making unbelievable profits and using them to bribe the press to support Chase's presidential drive. "Accordingly," said the Congressman dryly, "we find a great many newspapers in favor of Chase for President, and very few people."

Picking up a letter from a New York informant, he read: "Have you heard that [Chase] has given his son-in-law, Governor Sprague, a permit to buy cotton at the South, by which he will probably make the snug little sum of two million dollars?" Blair let the charge stand with-

out elaboration. Fortunately for Sprague and Chase, he knew nothing about the Texas Adventure.

Feelings ran so high that Blair had to shout most of the time to make himself heard. Chase was still working to get the Presidency, he cried. He withdrew his name only because the Pomeroy circular backfired. "It was such a disgraceful and disgusting sight to make use of the patronage and power given him by the President against his chief, that even Chase got ashamed to occupy such a position publicly." Now he was working underground and running his "machine on the public money as vigorously as ever."²⁴ As the Speaker brought down his gavel, Blair stalked out of the House and went directly to Lincoln, who that afternoon restored his commission as major general.

Chase learned of Blair's speech and the restoration of his commission as he was getting on a train in Washington. Sprague and one of Chase's friends, Congressman Albert G. Riddle of Ohio, walked in dead silence to the station, where they were met by Kate. She announced that her father wanted to see the Congressman alone.

"I was shown to Mr. Chase's presence in the car set apart for his use," recalled the awed Mr. Riddle. "He was alone, and in a frightful rage, and controlled himself with difficulty while he explained the cause. The recital in a hoarse, constrained voice, seemed to rekindle his anger and aggravate its intensity. The spacious car fairly trembled under his feet. . . . 'All this has been done with the cordial approval of the President,' " he roared. Chase was kept from resigning immediately only by the assurance that his friends would demand a full explanation from the President.²⁵

When he and another Ohio Congressman arrived at the White House on their unpleasant errand, Riddle was shocked by Lincoln's haggard appearance. "He looked like a man worn and harassed with petty fault-finding and criticism, until he had turned at bay like an old stag pursued and hunted by a cowardly rabble of men and dogs." The callers noticed that they were received with "no pretence of cordiality"; but the President's manner softened abruptly when they assured him they favored his renomination and were concerned about the Blair matter only because they feared Chase would resign and split the party before

the election. "Gentlemen, I am glad to meet you, glad for your mission, and especially for your way of executing it," Lincoln then said. "Have you seen my letter to Mr. Chase of February twenty-ninth, in reply to his of the twenty-second [in which Chase denied complicity in the Pomeroy affair]?" he asked as he picked up some papers from his desk.

"I have not," replied Riddle.

As Lincoln read them his letter, he laid special emphasis on the words ". . . and I assure you, as you have assured me, that no assault has been made upon you by my instigation, or with my countenance." Putting the letter aside, the President explained that when Blair mentioned he was going to make a speech on trade regulations, he had told him to do the subject justice, but warned against making it "the occasion of pursuing a personal warfare. . . ." Blair's return to the army had been arranged weeks beforehand, Lincoln went on cheerfully, and the fact that his commission was restored on the day of his speech was purely accidental.

"And thus you see how far I am responsible for Frank Blair's assaults on Mr. Chase."

"Mr. President, spare us all further details. We only ask your word," said one of the Congressmen, and they left satisfied.²⁶

Both ignored the fact that Lincoln had not flatly denied responsibility for Blair's attack, and perhaps they overlooked an ironic twinkle in his eye as he implied his innocence by reading the letter in which he assured Chase, as Chase had assured him, that he was not responsible for assaults upon his Secretary. If Lincoln's assurances were extended in the same spirit of guile and duplicity as Chase's, the Congressmen certainly should not have asked to be spared details. Years later Montgomery Blair confided to a friend that Lincoln had deliberately sent for Frank Blair to come from the army "to assail Chase on the floor of the House of Representatives."²⁷

It was clear that Lincoln, the prairie politician, had outfoxed his Olympian rival again; and as in December, 1862, the last time Chase openly challenged his position, Lincoln did it by playing Chase's game better than he could himself.

Chase was a man of inordinate passions, but usually to the world he showed only a fraction of his emotions, submerging the rest in the icy regions of his soul. At first he tried to shrug off Blair's speech airily, saying, "Don't trouble yourself about the Blairs. Dogs will bark at the moon, but I have never heard that the moon stopped on that account." To Nettie he wrote: "So, dear child, do good for the sake of doing it, not for reward or applause. Your heavenly Father will see and bless you."²⁸

But as time went on, Chase could not contain himself. His chances for the nomination were ruined. Ohio along with the rest of the North stood for Lincoln; and the Blairs, whom he blamed for this unspeakable catastrophe—this destruction of everything he had worked for during long, toilsome years—those same Blairs had robbed him of his good name. Even Montgomery Blair would later admit without regret that Chase "certainly had reason to feel resentment, and would have been something more or less than a man if he had [not] felt it."²⁹ And, along with everything else, Chase had to bear the continuing silence from the White House. Lincoln, frozen in a sphinxlike silence, did not repudiate Blair's attacks, nor did he remove the general from command.

Chase's restraints finally snapped, but even his friends were not pleased when he began openly attacking the President. The Union Party, as the Republicans euphemistically called themselves in 1864, was determined to close ranks for the election and speak, as much as possible, with one tongue. Once Lincoln was assured of renomination, Chase was urged to fall into step, but he was only contemptuous of his faint-hearted friends whose political ambitions taught them political agility. They managed to jump from his caravan just before the crash; but Chase, the driver, never hesitated for a moment as he careened toward disaster.

Kate understood the full measure of their defeat long before her father. When she came back to the capital after her honeymoon, Chase thought all was going well with her. "Kate seems very happy," he said. "She and her husband seem to love each other dearly." Knowing Kate as well as they did, both her father and her husband spoke of her

new bliss tentatively. By spring it was plain that something had gone wrong. Winter had brought the Pomeroy circular and the full exposure of her husband's political impotence. Spring brought the angry denunciations of that red-bearded demon Frank Blair, and spring brought the renomination of Abraham Lincoln. In four years Chase might have another chance for the Republican nomination, Kate hoped, but she knew by then that her marriage was a failure. She had married William Sprague for one reason: to use his influence and money to make her father President. Like Ohio, Rhode Island had gone for Lincoln, and Sprague's money had gone for nought. It was clear that, although he was shrewd enough to buy himself a governorship and a seat in the Senate, he did not have the wit to engineer a presidential campaign. Perhaps Kate had learned from events following the Pomeroy circular that her husband might balk at being used for her father's political advantage. Perhaps she had learned from Frank Blair that her husband had had designs of his own when he married her, that he had tried to use her father to gain a favorable position in the cotton trade. Kate had difficulty staying well that spring; and finally, at the very time Frank Blair was making his sensational charges about her father and her husband, she gave in to a long, enervating illness that left her thin and listless. "Kate is almost herself again after her illness, which frightened me not a little," Chase told Nettie. "Her husband is all devotion, and to be so petted it was almost worthwhile to be sick." ⁸⁰

With his money Sprague tried to make up for his defects as a husband. He bought Kate the house at Sixth and E streets, gave her a splendid carriage, a red and black brougham with pearl-gray upholstery, and paid over eleven thousand dollars for the horses in his stable.⁸¹ But that spring something more was required for his shortcomings: he had to reply to Frank Blair's charges about his favored position with the Treasury Department. For some reason, the Senator did not immediately spring to his own defense. He dallied, postponing his answer for two and a half months until July 4, the last day of the Senate session. Perhaps he — and his father-in-law — wanted to make certain that they, rather than the Blairs, would have the last word on

the matter. Chase, having lost some confidence in Sprague's ability by that time, spent a day revising his proposed remarks.³²

Sprague was permitted a week to practice the final draft before he arose to make his reply. He deplored Blair's "poisonous arrows," declaring that neither for his partners ". . . nor for myself, nor for anybody else, have I asked or received any special privileges to buy cotton or anything else. Nor have I made since this war began, from any buying and trading in cotton, permitted or unpermitted, licensed or unlicensed, the millionth part of two millions of dollars, nor the millionth part of that millionth."³³

Kate could not have been pleased with her husband's tardy speech, buried in the hustle of the last day of the session; but her father, choosing to believe what he chose to believe, thought Sprague a thunderous success. ". . . a statement of great force and power . . . which was listened to with breathless attention," wrote Chase in his admiring diary. Sprague, who rarely said an audible word on the Senate floor, could scarcely command breathless attention; but it was true that his speech was more quietly received than that of Frank Blair.³⁴

But by then it was too late for speeches. Five days before Sprague got to his feet in the Senate, Salmon P. Chase had at last exceeded Lincoln's endless patience.

Their truce came to an end over a question of patronage. In June, John J. Cisco, Assistant Treasurer in New York, resigned. Honest and capable, Cisco had been a boon to the Treasury in appeasing New York financiers when the Philadelphian Jay Cooke stole into the financial world. His resignation left Chase with a touchy problem of the balance of political power within New York,³⁵ and he went about settling it to his satisfaction in a way that showed a reckless disregard for local feelings. Ignoring demands of prominent New Yorkers, including one of the Senators of that state, that a moderate Republican be named to the post, he chose one of his friends, Maunsell B. Field.

Mr. Field was a man whose ignorance of finance was so smooth and well mannered that he had charmed Chase into thinking him indis-

pensable to the Treasury. He lived a life of hunger and thirst after the influential and summed up his achievements in a book entitled *Memo-ries of Many Men and Some Women, Being Personal Recollections of Emperors, Kings, Queens, Presidents, Statesmen, Authors, and Artists at Home and Abroad, During the Last Thirty Years*. When not lusting after some stray European noble, Field wooed republican Salmon P. Chase with such refinement that he soon became a trusted employee in the Treasury Department. As one of the Secretary's associates observed wryly, "Secretary Chase was fond of those who recognized his eminence. . . ." ³⁶

Upon learning that Lincoln refused to appoint Field, Chase decided to force the matter by handing in one of his periodic resignations.³⁷ Lincoln understood him to be saying, "You have been acting very badly. Unless you say you are sorry, & ask me to stay & agree that I shall be absolute and that you shall have nothing, no matter how you beg for it, I will go." ³⁸

After reading over Chase's letter, Lincoln leaned back in his chair. Ever since the Baltimore convention, he had been in a position to dispense with his Secretary's kind services. By the end of June the Radicals, albeit grudgingly, had swung over to the President; and Chase, discredited by Frank Blair's attacks and the various investigations of the seamy side of the Treasury Department, did not seem a likely alternative if they turned away from Lincoln at the last minute. The President decided to accept the resignation.

The next morning he sent for his secretary John Hay. "When does the Senate meet today?" he asked.

"Eleven o'clock," said Hay.

"I wish you to be there when they meet. It is a big fish. Mr. Chase has resigned and I have accepted his resignation. I thought I could not stand it any longer." ³⁹

Hay was at the Senate door with the nomination of Chase's successor before the chaplain finished delivering the opening prayer. That morning Chase, too, was at the Capitol on Treasury business; and there to his astonishment he heard about the President's action. When he hurried back to his office, he found a letter waiting for him:⁴⁰

June 30, 1864

HON. SALMON P. CHASE:

My Dear Sir: Your resignation of the office of Secretary of the Treasury, sent me yesterday, is accepted. Of all I have said in commendation of your ability and fidelity I have nothing to unsay; and yet you and I have reached a point of mutual embarrassment in our official relations which it seems can not be overcome or longer sustained consistently with the public service.

Your obedient servant,
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

In his mortification and surprise, Chase seemed to forget he had resigned, not been fired. "I had found a good deal of embarrassment from him," he said hotly, "but what he had found from me I could not imagine, unless it has been caused by my unwillingness to have offices distributed as spoils or benefits. . . . *He had never given me the active and earnest support I was entitled to. . . .*"⁴¹

Chase sent a hurried note to his friend Stanton in the War Department to tell him that he had resigned. "It would have been grateful to me to be able to consult you," he said, "but I feared you might be prompted by your generous sentiments to take some step injurious to the country."⁴² Stanton ignored the implied invitation to resign, too. Knowing that Lincoln would have little difficulty in finding a Radical to take his place, he sent his regrets to Chase and nothing to the President.

Grimly Chase set himself to the task of being "willing and glad" to be disconnected from the administration, as he told himself he ought to be; but he had great difficulty in covering his embarrassment and vexation. He was particularly irked that he had been allowed to withdraw over an undramatic issue; and in rationalizing his resignation, he soon elevated it to a high moral plane by dropping the patronage question entirely. He could not endure being put on the same level as Montgomery Blair by the President "with some—perhaps considerable—balance on the Blair side," he said. Nor was he able to accede to Lincoln's view ". . . that the best policy is to have no policy, and he can not sympathize with my desires for positive and energetic action."⁴³ Once

the issue was disposed of, Chase had a harder time convincing himself that he had selected a propitious time for leaving his department, for it seemed unlikely that the public had forgotten the investigations and criticism that had rocked the Treasury for the last six months.

He had been out of office two days before he was able to bring himself to write Kate, who at that critical time happened to be vacationing in Rhode Island. "I ought to have written you long before but I have been oversome affected by these recent anxieties," he told her. "There is only one consolation. The crushing load is off my shoulders. There is only a partial cause of regret. I can't finish what I began. . . ." ⁴⁴

Sprague's letters to Kate so alarmed her that she wanted to come to Washington to be with her father during his trial, but Chase urged her to stay in Rhode Island. "Your good husband, I think, in his indignation against those who contrive evil against me has magnified the trial of my resignation to you. I really have not felt it as such." When Lincoln's attitude made useful service impossible, he said, he had found it easy to resign. "If you think me wronged or not appreciated let nobody think you think so," he cautioned, fearing that Kate in her anger would embarrass him by revealing his real feelings. ⁴⁵

Two weeks later, as he was about to leave for a vacation in the White Mountains, Chase wrote in his journal sadly: "Half of my fifty-seventh year is ended. Today I leave Washington a private citizen. Saw Stanton before leaving; he was warm and cordial as ever. No other head of a department has called." ⁴⁶

The general reaction to his resignation had suddenly aged Chase into a lonely old man. The day after the news was out, he and Sprague had dined alone, and few friends had called afterward to express regrets. At least two of his former Cabinet colleagues felt positive relief at his departure. Welles nodded approvingly and wrote in his diary: "I look upon it as a blessing. The country could not go on a great while longer under his management. . . . Chase's retirement has offended nobody, and has gratified almost everybody." Attorney General Bates remarked, ". . . as far as my information goes, there seems to be a vague feeling of relief from a burden, and a hope of better things." One of those better things was a new and different Treasury Department. "If [the

President will] just let me 'take the responsibility' I'll make short work of Mr. Chase's knot of ignorant and rapacious swindlers, from Balise to C[a]iro." ⁴⁷

The Cookes in particular might have been expected to share Chase's melancholy, but they were consoled by the fact that the market survived his departure from the national scene.⁴⁸ What regret they felt they were careful to hide, suspecting that any display of undue sadness would arouse the suspicion that they got advantages from Chase that they could not expect from anyone else.

"So my official life closes," Chase wrote ruefully in his diary.⁴⁹ There seemed to be only one possible ray of hope in his situation.

On the very day he resigned, Congressman Hooper from Massachusetts dropped into his office with arresting news. Lincoln had recently expressed regrets to the Congressman that his relations with Chase were not free from embarrassment. Expressing esteem for him, the President had gone on to say he intended, in case of a vacancy in the Chief Justiceship, to offer it to Chase; for he remembered that not long after he became Secretary of the Treasury he had said he would rather be Chief Justice than any other officer in the government. Hooper said he had the feeling that Lincoln told him about his intentions so that he could repeat them to Chase. Chase could not conceal his distress at this tardy news. Plaintively, he said, ". . . it was quite possible, had any such expressions of good will reached me, I might, before the present difficulty arose, have gone to him and had a fresh understanding, which would have prevented it. . . ." ⁵⁰

Now that he had broken with the administration, had he lost all chance for the appointment? If so, why had Lincoln repeated the remark about the Chief Justiceship when the Senate Finance Committee called on him about Chase's resignation? ⁵¹ Perhaps Lincoln was dropping a hint that if his ex-Cabinet member behaved himself during the coming election campaign he would become Chief Justice.

As he sadly packed his trunks and made ready for his lonely departure from the capital, Chase may have recalled a conversation he had had with John Hay six months before, in January, when his political fortunes had been at high tide. Leaning back smugly in his chair, he

had said to the young man, "It is singularly instructive to meet so often as we do in life and in history, instances of vaulting ambition, meanness and treachery failing after enormous exertions and integrity and honesty march straight in triumph to its purpose."

Hay had noted the remark in his diary with the dry comment, "A noble sentiment, Mr. Secretary." ⁵²

CHAPTER VIII

As We Forgive Our Enemies

AFTER his political downfall Chase might well have been consoled by his many achievements in office. When he came to the Treasury Department, the country had never been more in need of a financial wizard; and in spite of a total lack of experience in public finance he had made a brilliant record. To pay for the war he had raised over half a billion dollars a year in loans, and he had sustained the public credit even though the public debt had doubled during his three years in office. With the help of Jay Cooke he had brought about a revolution in war financing by successfully offering popular bond issues. Spurred on by Congress, "Old Greenbacks" had given the country its first uniform currency system; he invented the motto "In God We Trust" to be inscribed on United States coins and secured the passage of the first national banking laws.¹

To Chase, however, the thought of his distinguished record was cold comfort when out of office. His success was only salt in his wounds; for, with his chances for the Presidency lost, he thought his public services cruelly unrewarded. "What did I get, what can anybody get for preferring country and duty to private interests and compliant favor?" he lamented.² For thirty years he had clung to public life and slowly made progress upward until, as he was reaching the final, ultimate pinnacle, he was discarded and cast back into the dark, silent, remorseless void of anonymity. Chase retreated to the hills of his birthplace in New Hampshire to brood about the ingratitude and meanness of his fellow men.

On his way he stopped in New York to see Nettie and Kate. One of the pleasures of self-esteem is to have that opinion shared by others; and Chase's daughters, who freely gave him the adulation and devotion

he was unable to inspire in the public, could do more than anyone else to restore his soul. When the public doubted him, Kate and Nettie accepted all his assumptions and all his pretensions. They saw him as he wanted to be seen, and they wanted for him what he wanted for himself. They alone mirrored his secret heart.

Kate and Nettie took their father to Newport, that fashionable world of sunlight and salt water, of dances and yachting parties, where money spared the summer crowds the discomforts of war and weather. Kate had taken to Rhode Island society with her characteristic energy and, as was her custom, claimed her place as its leader. Her beauty had undergone a change in the three years since she had come to Washington. After her marriage, she, who had never practiced frugality with success, no longer had any need to try. As her gowns and jewels had become richer, her dignity and composure had stiffened, and a trace of bold arrogance had stolen into her manners. Most people forgave her, for she seemed to be making no undue pretensions in claiming superiority. She was a brilliant woman, the most brilliant woman who had ever entered the American political scene, the most influential political hostess Washington had ever known; and her power was uniquely hers, the creation of her own personality rather than her position. Kate knew the arts of politics as a musical genius knows the laws of composition. Education had sharpened her faculty but did not account for it. No one could have taught her how to intrigue men as diverse as squirrellike Carl Schurz and glacial Charles Sumner or how to compromise the most closely hoarded secrets of the most guarded politicians or how to guess what she was not told. No one could have taught her to be a sorceress, casting a spell on men, transforming the humble into the mighty, the ignorant into the wise, the indifferent into the devoted.

There was witchcraft in Kate's charm; there was something mysterious, even dangerous. There were times when she did not seem entirely in command of herself, like the girl in the fairy tale who put on bewitched slippers and found that she could not stop dancing. Her friends probably explained Kate's unusual energy as signs of youthfulness and singular ability; no one except her father seemed to suspect that her fire was self-consuming.

After the renomination of Abraham Lincoln, she had wanted desperately to get away from everything familiar — politics, Washington, and Rhode Island. Ohio newspapers carried reports that she was going to accompany her father abroad for her health; but Chase finally decided that at that critical time in his career he dared not leave the country.³ When Kate could not persuade Sprague to go to Europe with her, she considered going by herself. Not long after her father left for the splendid solitude of the White Mountains, she wrote him: "My husband . . . seems to dread the idea of my leaving him & hopes on every account that the trip to Europe is abandoned for this summer." But when Kate eventually made up her mind to stay at home, she did so for the sake of her father, not Sprague. Despite the Baltimore convention, the political situation of the North was still unsettled; and in the event that some new development should swing Chase back in the race for the Presidency, she wanted to be on hand.⁴

Both Kate and her father were informed of the undercurrents of dissatisfaction with Lincoln in some quarters of the Republican Party, feelings that were inflamed by the military situation that summer. Chase had been foremost among those who celebrated the appointment of Ulysses S. Grant as commander of the Union armies in March, 1864; and he had told Lincoln somewhat ungraciously, "I am glad to understand that the military work of suppressing the rebellion is now to be prosecuted with system, and the utmost vigor."⁵ Even if, as Chase thought, Grant brought the army system and vigor that Lincoln, the commander in chief, had not, the general was unable to bring victory. In the spring of 1864, that aggressive fighter had started his long, bloody, oblique advance upon Richmond, impeded always by the army of General Lee. When Grant had struck Lee's line in the wilderness and at Spotsylvania and finally at Cold Harbor, he had been badly shattered; and before midsummer the Union general had suffered over sixty thousand casualties.⁶ In that war of attrition General Lee's limited strength was drained dangerously low, but he was able to give the South a welcome stalemate throughout the summer by immobilizing the Union army in a protracted, dull, slow siege of Petersburg to the south of Richmond. By August, general disaffection over war aims and

prosecution had pricked leading Northern newspapers to call for the nomination of another Republican candidate in the hope that someone other than Lincoln would be able to break the deadlock and bring victory and peace to the Union.

In mid-August some prominent Republicans, including the Speaker of the House, met secretly in New York to discuss the idea. Many of Chase's friends and the Blairs' enemies were represented, and Chase himself was invited to one of their meetings. He sent regrets that were guarded, excusing himself with the curious remark, ". . . my views are by no means as clear as I could wish. . . ." ⁷

It was unlike monolithic Salmon P. Chase to be confused in his thinking, but he was not himself during those dark days after his resignation. At the beginning of the summer he had given a nod of approval to a movement to offer him the congressional nomination from his Cincinnati district. When his friends suffered an overwhelming defeat, the full measure of his isolation from power bore down upon him.⁸ But despite all his setbacks, Chase clung to his ambition as if it were his life. That summer he was faced with several possible courses. Never for a moment did he overlook the possibility of winning the nomination of dissident Republicans, and he made enough political side trips from the White Mountains to make at least one editor grumble, "Chase is going around, peddling his griefs in private cars and sowing dissatisfaction about Lincoln." If his Republican friends failed him, Chase still had hope of success in another quarter. Senator Pomeroy had told him in June that when news of his resignation reached the Senate, several Democrats had come up to say, "We'll go with you now for Chase." Fantastic as it might have seemed for the Democrats to nominate a Radical Republican, Chase did not rule out the possibility. After mulling over Pomeroy's remarks he concluded, "This . . . might mean much if the Democrats would only cut loose from slavery and go for freedom. . . . *If they would do that, I would cheerfully go for any man they might nominate.*" ⁹ He devoutly hoped that when the Democrats went for freedom, they would also go for Chase.

There was still another possibility: he could support the President. Lincoln saw the various avenues leading away from the Treasury De-

partment; and, deciding that he would help Chase choose the one which also led away from the White House, he told John Hay, ". . . what Chase ought to do is to help his successor through his installation . . . go home without making any fight and wait for a good thing hereafter, such as a vacancy on the Supreme Bench or some such matter."¹⁰ And to make certain that Chase got wind of the bait, Lincoln dropped several broad hints to Chase's friends that he was being considered for the post of Chief Justice.

The position was then filled by ancient Roger Brooke Taney, whose decision on the Dred Scott slavery case had started a chain reaction of passions that were not to be resolved in a court of law. The old man had lived to see the appeal carried to the battlefield, but it seemed that he would not survive to witness the final decision. Chase knew Taney was in failing health. He also knew that if he openly supported the Republicans who were plotting against the President or made overtures to the Democrats, Lincoln would not nominate him to take Taney's place. Therefore, discretion, if not duty, demanded that he spend a quiet summer. A word might betray him; it might destroy one of his chances to recoup his fortunes. All during the long hot months of July and August, Chase did nothing about the coming election. No word of support for Lincoln escaped him, but neither did he criticize the President with his usual heat. Until he saw a bandwagon begin to roll, his thinking would be, as he regretfully said, "by no means as clear as I could wish."

Suddenly the tides of politics and war turned in Lincoln's favor. At the end of August the Democrats met at Chicago to nominate General George B. McClellan on a platform calling the war "four years of failure" and demanding that hostilities cease, statements that in effect put an end to their chances at the polls.¹¹ September brought news of Union victories. Sherman captured Atlanta and began his march to the sea. Admiral Farragut seized Mobile, and General Phil Sheridan at last laid the ghost of Stonewall Jackson by wresting the Shenandoah Valley from the Confederates. Republican insurgents quietly disbanded and took up their places behind Lincoln. By the first of September it was widely rumored in Washington that Chief Justice Taney was dying.

Chase had been insisting that any reconciliation with Lincoln would have to be initiated by the President; but, after weighing the matter over in his mind, he decided that he had better grab on to Lincoln's coattails or be lost. Less than two weeks after the Democratic convention he came down from his mountain and went to Washington. He hoped for some sort of promise from the President as encouragement to take to the campaign stump in his behalf, but in that expectation he was disappointed. "I have seen the President twice since I have been here," he wrote Kate. "Both times third persons were present, and there was nothing like private conversation. His manner was evidently intended to be cordial & so were his words; and I hear of nothing but good will from him. But you know he is not at all demonstrative either in speech or manner. . . . I feel that I do not know him." Inscrutable as Lincoln was, Chase decided that his only choice was to support him. "Whether [I] will be rewarded I do not know," he told Kate with vexation.¹²

It was not in Chase's nature to justify his decision in terms of expediency. All his motives and actions took on a protective moral coloration: in his letters and conversations, even in his remarks to his private diary, he was forever washing away his sins, forever absolving himself of baseness or impurity. When he did favors for Jay Cooke and Company, he did them, not because the Cookes were handling his private finances and boosting his presidential bid, but because they merited privileges for their devoted service to their country. When he connived to get the Republican nomination, he did not campaign, but merely expressed his unwillingness to thwart the will of the people. When he kept Hiram Barney in the New York Customhouse despite clear evidence of corruption, he did not do so because Barney was his political agent or because he owed him money, but because he was willing to sacrifice himself to protect the reputation of his friends.

Now Chase reviewed his relations with Lincoln; and, by the time he was ready to declare himself in support of the President's candidacy, he concluded that their difficulties had arisen because he had been "too earnest and eager," and Lincoln "not earnest enough and too slow. . . . But I never desired anything else than his complete success, and

never indulged a personal feeling incompatible with absolute fidelity to his Administration. To assure that success I labored incessantly in the Treasury Department. . . . When I found that the use of my name in connection with the Presidency would interfere with my usefulness in that department, I seized the opportunity . . . to ask that no further consideration should be given my name. . . . I think even now there would never have been any difficulty about our getting along together, could he have understood my sentiments just as they were. . . .”¹³

Chase’s memory served up the past with more convenience than fidelity; but his revision of history served a useful purpose in one respect at least: it made campaigning for Lincoln’s re-election almost palatable. In his explanations he said nothing about the Chief Justiceship. Perhaps he tried not to think about it.

Chase dreaded the prospect of a long separation from Kate while he went to Ohio to make speeches. By then he had become seriously alarmed about her health. A cough still lingered on from her early spring illness, and she seemed incapable of regaining her vitality. Late in the summer he wrote her tenderly: “Don’t risk your health. Keep up your cheerfulness & put . . . your trust in God. You will, of course, have your little trials but just think what you have to be thankful for.”¹⁴ Kate thought and grieved. If her father were willing to accept something less than the Presidency, what would be left for her? Tradition dictated that the Chief Justice was to be Justice incarnate — eyes blindfolded, hands holding an impartial scale. What use would Kate be to such a demigod, dwelling in a rarefied atmosphere above and beyond politics? She had been born with her eyes wide open — a politician who used only the swift, sure scale of expediency, a partisan who loved strife and barter, the confusion of the political market-place and its rewards. Now she seemed about to have everything slip through her fingers.

Kate had one other crisis to face that summer — a crisis in her marriage. She had been willing to tolerate Sprague when he seemed a necessary factor in the presidential equation; but when she saw her error, she despised her husband. Her father had had a glimpse of her

unhappiness when he stopped at Narragansett Pier on his way to Washington in September. At first the visit had been pleasant, and Chase had written happily in his diary: ". . . delightful place . . . a house full — a merry game of croquet —" But his satisfaction was shattered by a furious quarrel between Kate and her husband which they made no attempt to hide. Eventually peace had been restored, and everyone had gone off to a clambake. Chase, however, had been much affected. The party had been very nice, and he had enjoyed the ride to the lighthouse at Point Judith in the evening; but the joy had gone out of his visit.¹⁵ Troubled as he was about his own future during the ensuing weeks, he seemed even more concerned about Kate's.

Chief Justice Taney's protracted hold upon the bench had sent many men into private life forever, waiting in vain to take his place. The Senate wag Ben Wade had remarked, "I prayed with earnestness for the life of Taney to be prolonged through Buchanan's Administration, and by God I'm a little afraid I've overdone the matter." Finally, in the middle of October, while Chase was electioneering in Ohio, Taney died. Chase was informed of the news by a telegram from his friend Stanton, who seemed as elated as the Northern citizen who remarked, "The Honorable old Roger B. Taney has earned the gratitude of his country by dying at last. Better late than never."¹⁶

When Chase's friends rushed forward to put his name in nomination, John Hay grumbled, "Already (before [Taney's] poor old clay is cold) they are beginning to canvass vigorously for his successor. Chase men say the place is promised to their *magnifico*. . . ." ¹⁷

Senator Sumner, with the authoritative presumption of a true Bostonian, told Chase it was his duty to accept the position. "Yes! accept," he wrote fervidly, "and complete our great reformation by purifying the Constitution, and upholding those measures by which the republic will be saved. God bless you!" ¹⁸

Chase replied that he had decided to take the advice: he would accept. "I feel that I can do more for our cause & our country & for the success of the next administration in that place than in any other. . . ." ¹⁹

To the consternation and surprise of Chase and his friends, Lincoln did not appear to be in a hurry to name Taney's successor. Perhaps not wanting to interrupt Chase's feverish efforts for his re-election, the President dallied over his decision, saying to John Hay, "I shall be very 'shut pan' about this matter."²⁰ Settling back comfortably in his office, he made a great show of considering the problem and watched the lively debate develop, saw earnest delegations come and go, heard this confidence and that, arguments for one man and another—all with an amused, impartial tolerance.

One of Chase's friends warned him that "your enemies as well as your friends are active." From all sides Lincoln was told that Chase was a man of little judicial knowledge, that his judgment of men was narrowed by selfishness, and that he had always been eager to cast the first stone at the administration. One Cabinet member told Gideon Welles privately that he was convinced Chase and Lincoln could never get along, and "that, were Chase in that position [Chief Justice]—a life tenure—he would exhibit his resentments against the President, who he thinks has prevented his upward official career. One of the strong traits of Chase . . . is the memory of differences, and that he never forgets or forgives those who have once thwarted him. He may suppress his revenge, but it is abiding." Welles did not think there was a possibility that Lincoln would appoint Chase. "The President sometimes does strange things, but this would be a singular mistake, in my opinion, for one who is so shrewd and honest—an appointment that he would soon regret."²¹

Putting on a long face at the attempts "to put up the bars between Governor Chase and myself," Lincoln would reply to the objections, "Mr. Chase is a very able man. He is a very ambitious man and I think on the subject of the Presidency a little insane. He has not always behaved very well lately and people say to me, 'Now is the time to crush him out.' Well, I'm not in favor of crushing anybody out! If there is anything that a man can do and do it well, I say let him do it."²²

But to Chase's friends he would say, ". . . [Chase] is a man of unbounded ambition, and has been working all his life to become President. That he can never be; and I fear that if I make him Chief Justice

he will simply become more restless and uneasy and neglect the place in his strife and intrigue to make himself President.”²³

Lincoln concluded that it would be unwise to call upon Chase for any definite promise to renounce politics;²⁴ but, aware of the strict taboo against judges maneuvering for office, he knew that the Chief Justiceship would box up his ambitions more effectively than any promise could. Perhaps that was one reason he had thought of Chase in the first place when old Taney began to falter.

As weeks passed without any decision from the White House, Chase began to grow panicky for fear that he would be passed over for another man. Finally, distraught by the suspense, he considered going to Washington, but his friends persuaded him to change his mind.²⁵ He could not restrain himself, however, from sending Lincoln an occasional letter during that trying period so that he would not be forgotten. When Hay brought the President one of those notes, Lincoln asked, “What is it about?”

“Simply a kind and friendly letter.”

“File it with his other recommendations,” replied Lincoln with a knowing smile.²⁶

Chase’s friends marched in force upon the President; but to their importunate chorus, he replied that he reckoned he would do nothing about the appointment until after the election.²⁷ Cold winds blew across the bleak farmlands of Ohio; ice began to form on the ponds at night; on their way to school children made frosty clouds with their breath; and still no word for Chase from Washington. All signs portended a long, cold winter. There was nothing to do but wait—and, of course, campaign for Lincoln’s re-election.

While he waited, Chase must have worried about his modest qualifications for the position.²⁸ Anticipating Lincoln’s preference for a distinguished jurist, one of Chase’s friends pointed out that his opinions on controversial issues were well known and that he could be depended on for support when the emergency measures of the administration were tested before the courts.

“Would you have me pack the Supreme Court, Mr. Riddle?” asked Lincoln dryly.

"Would you appoint a man with no preconceived notions of the law?" countered Riddle.

Lincoln answered only, "This is a matter for reflection."²⁹ He decided, "We cannot ask a man what he will do, and if we should, and he should answer us, we should despise him for it. Therefore we must take a man whose opinions are known."³⁰ On two crucial matters—emancipation and legal tender—Chase's record was clear, or so Lincoln thought. Chase himself had wanted to be the Great Emancipator; and, inasmuch as he had been Secretary of the Treasury when greenbacks became legal tender, it seemed safe to assume that he was sound on the money question.³¹

Many of Lincoln's friends had dependable views on those issues; and the President seemed sorely tempted to offer the position to one of them, to Montgomery Blair, for instance; but the truth was that he no longer had a free hand in the matter. Chase had done his best to insure the Radicals' support at the polls, but the President was plainly not happy about fulfilling his part of the bargain. To one Senator he complained that he "would rather have swallowed his buckthorn chair than to have nominated Chase."³²

The golden rule of politics is to do unto your enemies what you would rather do unto your friends. A few weeks after the election, the President submitted his final decision to the Senate: "I nominate Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, vice Roger B. Taney, deceased."³³

The Senate paid Chase the compliment of confirming his nomination without referring his name to committee, and his jubilant friends showered him and themselves with congratulations. Only Kate appeared displeased by the honor being done her father. She saw the appointment as a genteel political exile contrived by Lincoln, and the President himself heard about her angry assertions that her father "was not to be set aside by a place on the bench." The disappointments and illness of the previous months were finally too much for her, and for the first time her poise cracked. When Chase hurried back to Washington, Senator Sumner was the first to come to his home to extend his congratulations. Kate met him at the door. Shaking her finger in his

face, she cried, "And you, too, Mr. Sumner: you, too, in this business of shelving papa? But never mind! I will defeat you all!"³⁴

Chase himself saw no reason for disappointment at receiving the highest judicial position in the land; for, unlike Kate, he was fond of philosophizing: "Be satisfied with skimmed milk if you can't get cream."³⁵ The Chief Justiceship, much richer skimmed milk than Chase had any right to expect from Lincoln, suited him exactly in many ways. His opinions on a wide spectrum of subjects (and Chase was a man of many opinions) would be given the highest possible sanction, and his secret love of ceremony — of vestments, altars, and liturgy — would no longer have to subsist on the meager fare of the Methodist Church. His dignified aloofness now had a Constitutional basis, and to some extent he was able to satisfy his passion to be first. Chief Justice for life, he was insured of a future of veneration, power, service, and security. No longer would he have to break into a quadrennial rash from presidential fever, but if he were to find that he was not satisfied with the court, no President would be able to stop his political adventures by removing him from office.

Moreover, Chase needed the money he would earn. Even after Kate's marriage, he had had to watch his own expenses carefully; and by June, just before leaving the Cabinet, he had been forced to extend his practice of borrowing from Barney and the Cookes to the lower echelons of the department, where he had found there was not much money to be had. Once out of office, Chase had been forced to depend on his son-in-law, a necessity that worried him. "The Governor attended to your bill which was very large," Kate had told him during the summer, almost as if she were warning him. Once his appointment to the bench looked certain, Chase had been relieved to hear from Henry D. Cooke, "Give yourself . . . no uneasiness as to your balance. . . . We can carry it as long as may be deemed advisable by you."³⁶

Chase was happy. All that remained was the formality of being sworn into office, a ceremony scheduled to take place a few days after the Senate confirmation. He could scarcely have worried that anything would happen in those few days to deprive him of this triumph.

In all probability he was oblivious of events that occurred during

those days, events that threatened to end his career forever — short of the Presidency and short of the Chief Justiceship. Something happened, something that threatened to connect Chase with a scandal involving treason.

The army had stumbled into the Texas Adventure.

The meeting of the Texas Adventurers in New York in January, 1864, was far from agreeable. One link in their operation — the accommodating New York Customhouse — was being investigated by a congressional committee for improper bonding and bribery; and there was a disturbing increase in rumors that certain unnamed Northerners in high places were doing business with the enemy. The lack of mutual trust at last pervaded the inner circle of the Texas Adventurers themselves as doubts about the integrity of Harris Hoyt began to disturb his partners. They were far from satisfied with his explanation of the fate of the two thousand bales of cotton he had hauled to the coast of Texas with the approval of General Magruder. Hoyt said the cotton had been burned. They wondered. He seemed to be prospering more than any of the rest of the group.³⁷

A few months later, when Hoyt returned South, he made the serious mistake of skipping out without paying Prescott his share of the profits. In July he returned to report that he had bought eighty thousand dollars' worth of cotton which he had arranged to have shipped north from Matamoras later in the year. Actually his outlay was considerably less than eighty thousand dollars, much of his money being counterfeit, bought in Washington, D. C., at ten cents on the dollar. His genuine Confederate money proved to be so lightweight that it aroused suspicion; and, he told his friends with indignation, he "came near being seized as a swindler."³⁸ Unaware of trouble ahead, the Texas Adventurers went their separate ways while waiting for their cotton to arrive.

Union officers had long been aware of the brisk sea trade slipping through the blockade from the rim of Texas, but for the most part they had been unable to prevent it with their slow ships, contemptuously dubbed "armed buoys" by the Confederates. By 1864, however, there

was a remarkable improvement in quality and quantity of the Union fleet. In the late fall the British schooner *Sybil* started out for New York from Matamoras with a hold full of cotton, over half of which was destined for Hoyt and his partners; but on November 20, 1864, about six hundred miles south of New York, it was captured by a ship of the South Atlantic blockading squadron.³⁹

Wise in the ways of the chancy trade, the Texas Adventurers had made certain that no papers on board the ship would identify the owners of the cargo. The commanding naval officer noticed, however, that there were records of cargo insurance with an English firm. Perhaps it was through those records that Union authorities traced out a trail that led to Charles L. Prescott in Troy, New York. Two weeks after the capture of the *Sybil* he was arrested by the army. Prescott, thinking he had been doublecrossed by Harris Hoyt, gave a full confession on Tuesday, December 6, 1864, to General John A. Dix, Commander of the Department of the East, with headquarters in New York.⁴⁰ On that same day Abraham Lincoln nominated Salmon P. Chase to be Chief Justice of the United States.

After hearing Prescott's incredible story, General Dix took immediate steps to arrest William H. Reynolds and Byron Sprague, who at the time happened to be staying at a New York hotel together. The bookkeeper of A. and W. Sprague and Company somehow got advance notice of what was afoot and desperately tried to warn Reynolds by telegraph. "Our office is closed by order of General Dix. The Provost Marshal has orders for your arrest and Byron Sprague's, for furnishing aid and comfort to the enemy."⁴¹ The army managed to intercept the message; and Byron Sprague and Reynolds, innocent of their danger, were easily apprehended, along with Harris Hoyt.

Rumors swept through Providence and New York City to Washington, D. C., where Senator William Sprague learned of the arrest of his partners. Early Saturday morning he sent a panic-stricken message to General Dix asking him to suspend action until Sprague had a chance to write him a letter.⁴² Then, controlling himself as best he could, the

Senator took counsel with himself about what he should do. He had to act coolly. Panic might cost him his life.

At all costs, he had to keep the scandal from becoming public—at least for a few days. If he failed, Salmon P. Chase might never become Chief Justice.

Sprague would have had nothing to worry about on that score if Congress had not been deliberately trying to annoy President Lincoln at the time. In late November, Lincoln had nominated Mr. James Speed of Kentucky to succeed Edward Bates as Attorney General, explaining, "My Cabinet has *shrunk up* North, and I must find a Southern man. I suppose if the twelve Apostles were to be chosen nowadays, the shrieks of locality would have to be heeded." The Senate Judiciary Committee held up the nomination several days to "convey a mild insinuation to the President that they did not know who James Speed of Kentucky was." As long as there was no Attorney General, the papers necessary for Chase's installation in office could not be issued. Sprague had no way of knowing how long the stalemate would last. Already that week crowds had twice gathered in the Supreme Court room in expectation of witnessing the ceremony, and twice they had been disappointed.⁴⁸

If the Senate dallied long enough for Sprague to be publicly implicated in the Texas Adventure, he knew there probably would be no installation ceremony. It would be hard for Chase to escape disgrace if a member of his immediate family were charged with treason. He had already been accused by Frank Blair of favoring his son-in-law in the cotton trade; and during his administration of the Treasury Department there had been uncovered enough instances of improper bonding, bribery, and favoritism to cast serious doubt on Chase's integrity. No matter that he had not been involved in the Texas Adventure! With the misuse of his office lying heavily against his good name, he would be damned by two simple facts: he had been in charge of the cotton trade with the seceded states, and William Sprague, his son-in-law, had somehow managed to continue operating his textile mills during the war with little curtailment in spite of the official regulations cutting off his former source of cotton.

Sprague had reason to suspect that Chase might decline the Chief Justiceship if he found out about the scandal, even if it had not been made public. And Kate, how would she take the news? Sprague had no doubts. It would provide a blissful climax indeed to the first fiscal year of their marriage. It was bad enough that Sprague had failed to get the Presidency for Chase; but now, if he were to embroil him in a scandal involving treason, if he were to rob him of the highest judicial office in the country and ruin his political future, Sprague's marriage would be finished. No, he could not let Kate know. She was expecting a baby in June.

On the same day he sent General Dix the telegram, Sprague sat down to write him a difficult letter. Hoping the general was meagerly informed, he carefully said nothing about his contacts with Hoyt—nothing about their meeting at Willard's and in Providence in the fall of 1862, nothing about his intercession on Hoyt's behalf with Secretaries Welles and Chase, nothing about his letters that were to have substituted for a Treasury trade permit. Mentioning the Union relief dodge but not insisting upon it, he was obviously willing to concede the possibility that Hoyt had committed treason if able to omit his own connections with the Texan. Sprague made no explanation of his extraordinary concern in the matter, hoping that Dix would conclude that he was intervening because the affair was a politically inspired attack on two men long publicly associated with him—Byron Sprague, his cousin, and William Reynolds, his colleague in the militia and cotton business, a man Sprague had publicly admitted recommending for a Treasury position in South Carolina during the war. Finally, just in case it was too late to cover up much of the venture, the Senator put all responsibility for the conduct of his firm in the unwilling hands of his cousin and, evoking the somewhat tarnished image of William Sprague, first volunteer of the war, explained that at the time in question he had been "engaged in the field and in executive duties."⁴⁴

Sprague had done what he could, and for the moment there was nothing further to do but wait for the general's decision. If Dix would only give him more time, he felt certain that he would be able to find a way out for everyone.

On the day Sprague wrote Dix, the *Providence Press* hinted that a big story was breaking. ". . . our streets have been full of rumors to the implication of certain prominent citizens engaged in contraband traffic with the rebels. . . . Their wealth . . . should not give them advantage." The smell of treason was winded in New York; on that same day the *New York Times* repeated the stories current in Rhode Island, but there continued to be no mention of names.⁴⁵

Three more times during the following week a brilliant assemblage gathered in the Supreme Court room at the Capitol in expectation of seeing the new Chief Justice sworn into office, and three times they were disappointed. As the week dragged on, Sprague heard nothing from General Dix.

When it became known that the installation ceremony would take place on December 15, 1864, there was great excitement throughout Washington. The capital had not seen a new Chief Justice sworn into office for almost thirty years, not since Roger B. Taney took the oath of office in 1836, when the United States was little more than fifty years old. When the court convened that day, the chamber was crowded to overflowing with dignitaries, members of Congress, foreign ministers, and handsomely dressed women. Conspicuous in the brilliant throng were three people—Nettie and Kate, and Senator William Sprague. There was a breathless hush in the crowded room as Chase read the oath of office to become the sixth Chief Justice of the United States.⁴⁶

Sprague listened with concealed elation. With all his partners under military arrest, he had somehow managed to get over the first big hurdle. He had kept the Texas Adventure from the public long enough to allow Chase to become Chief Justice. Now he had to concentrate on saving his own neck by keeping it quiet forever.

Apparently, during the previous week end Sprague had been successful in communicating with Harris Hoyt as well as General Dix. On Monday, three days before the Supreme Court ceremony, Hoyt gave a second account of the affair, more jumbled than the first, but far more favorable to the interests of William Sprague. He tried to explain away his bogus trading permits by saying that they had been

written because of Sprague's "sincere desire to benefit the Union people of Texas and myself among the rest and God knows that I hope and trust that he may not suffer any annoyance in consequence." He added plaintively and probably truthfully, "I am thankful that I am in New York in the hands of General Dix instead of being in Texas in the hands of General Magruder, but I would much prefer to be at home with my dear family to either."⁴⁷ Charles Prescott, however, refused to change his story; and his subsequent elaborations only served to make the guilt of all parties—William Sprague included—more apparent. Still Sprague hoped there would be some way out.

To Kate, sitting beside her husband during the ceremony, that occasion was both a triumph and an indignity. The appointment, the unanimous confirmation, and the congratulations of many well-wishers throughout the country had erased to some extent the humiliating events of the last year. After seeming to be a part of the Blair conspiracy against her father and accepting Chase's resignation with unflattering haste, President Abraham Lincoln appeared to have been forced to recognize his power and integrity by naming him to the highest judicial position in the land. Her father had risen from second in the Cabinet to second in the government; and yet, as long as he was second, Kate could not rejoice. And she knew that the mile from the Supreme Court to the White House is the longest possible distance between two political points.

In the tense days of December that followed the ceremony, William Sprague made one of his few speeches in the Senate. With his agents behind bars and his blockade-running operation smashed, he began taking a lively interest in the legitimate aspects of the cotton trade, especially in the problems that would arise when the war was over and the blockade lifted. His main objective that winter was the imposition of another kind of blockade—tariffs or other restrictive measures that would keep foreign goods from the American market. A few days before the Christmas recess, he announced that the Stars and Stripes were currently being made of cotton cloth manufactured by the British.

Drawing himself up in eloquent indignation at this stain on the American emblem, he declared, "I disclaim all sentiment, yet I do not believe but that our victories will be more triumphant, our peace more permanent, if every fiber of our flag is handled in its construction by brave men and fair women, whose prayers will ascend to a just God to defend it." ⁴⁸

The brave men and fair women Sprague had in mind had need of a just God to supplement the four-dollars-a-week pay they received in his cotton mills. He neglected to say that he had been supplying these good citizens with Southern cotton run through the blockade under the flag of the perfidious British. Apparently Sprague held the curious view that Union victories would be more triumphant and peace more permanent if won under flags woven from Confederate cotton exchanged for arms and ammunition.

Two months later, in February, Sprague again appeared in the Senate with a manuscript. In this speech, favoring the immediate enfranchisement of the Negro, he set a political record by coming out strongly in favor of mankind.

"Sir, I am for perpetuating all races of man. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form, and moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god! Sir, I am for all races of man." ⁴⁹

For all his enthusiasm for the nobility of mankind, amateur psalmist William Sprague probably made an exception in the case of one Harris Hoyt.

While Sprague was making speeches on Americanism and the flag, Hoyt was pacing back and forth in his cell in a New York prison. And while Sprague was in the Senate extolling mankind, Hoyt was in court confessing what he knew about the Texas Adventure.

In January, more than a month after his capture, Hoyt was brought to trial at Fort Lafayette, but all the other parties — Byron Sprague, Reynolds, and Prescott — were released on parole. Terrified that he alone was to take the responsibility for the Texas Adventure, Hoyt forgot all William Sprague's promises and threats and, in a panic, made

a confidential full confession implicating the Senator. After two days of hearing testimony, military officials decided to postpone Hoyt's trial until his story could be checked against the testimony of the others implicated and a careful study made to determine whether or not they should stand trial with him.

General Dix knew that he had an important case on his hands, a case that could seriously embarrass the Lincoln administration by involving a United States Senator and perhaps even the former Secretary of the Treasury in charges of treason. A month later he referred the matter to the Secretary of War for his consideration:⁵⁰

Harris Hoyt of Texas was arrested by me several months ago for a violation of the laws of war by running goods into and cotton out of that state and is still in custody. One of the vessels concerned in this giving aid and comfort to the enemy was captured by a U. S. cruiser and confiscated. The parties who furnished the capital, knowing how it was to be employed, were Messers. Wm. Sprague, U. S. Senator, Byron Sprague, his brother [actually his cousin], and Wm. H. Reynolds & Co. . . .

The high social standing of those gentlemen makes the case one of great delicacy and I regard it also as a question of importance whether . . . the facts charged, if proved, constitute a mere violation of the laws of war, or a high crime under the Constitution of the United States.

There are at least two witnesses to the fact of illicit trade, and ample written proof.

Harris Hoyt and Charles L. Prescott, who were parties in the interest, are willing to testify to all the facts in the case provided their doing so shall not inure to their own conviction.

General Dix knew that his point would be clear to Secretary Stanton. Prescott and Hoyt had decided to improve their chances of survival by turning state's evidence against Reynolds and the Spragues; and General Dix, therefore, had the necessary two witnesses for treason convictions as required by the Constitution.

General Dix must have assumed that Secretary Stanton, in view of the importance of those involved and the political implications of an

indictment, would transmit the particulars of the case to President Lincoln before making his final decision. However, on the very day that General Dix made out his report to Stanton, President Lincoln boarded the ship *River Queen* to make a trip to the headquarters of General Grant, outside Richmond. A week later Secretary Stanton urged the President to remain with the army in the hope that his presence would aid in bringing about the surrender of Richmond. "There is . . . nothing to be done here but petty private ends that you should not be annoyed with," he assured Lincoln.⁵¹

Lincoln did not return to Washington until the morning of April 9, 1865. Perhaps his Secretary of War, preoccupied with the consequences of the spring breakup of Grant's long siege of Petersburg, neglected to confer with the President about the matter of the Texas Adventure for as long as six days after his return. John Wilkes Booth, on April 14, 1865, ended forever Lincoln's concern with that or any other problem.

After that night the question of an exposure and a trial was in the hands of Chase's cunning friend and ex-colleague in the Cabinet — Secretary Edwin M. Stanton.

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER I

The Seeds of Doubt

THE SUN was shining brightly as the procession started toward the White House. Pennsylvania Avenue was lined with cheering crowds, and people leaned from the windows of shops to shout and wave at the parade. Bands were playing, and there were soldiers in stiff new uniforms; but the center of attention was a single carriage, a stately black brougham with a red and gold coat of arms on the door, a carriage belonging to Chase and the Spragues. William Sprague had bought it to replace the shabby one which Kate and her father had used before her marriage and had had emblazoned on the door the armorial bearings of his family. On March 4, 1865, that carriage had been selected to carry the newly installed President of the United States to the White House. Within sat not Salmon P. Chase but Abraham Lincoln, a tired, ill man, thirty pounds underweight, strained to the breaking point by his four-year ordeal.

A few minutes before, Chief Justice Chase, a black-robed symbol of the Constitutional process, had administered the oath to Lincoln on the east portico of the Capitol. As Lincoln had placed his hand on the Bible to repeat the oath, sunlight had broken through the thin clouds, surrounding him with a blinding shaft of light. The crowds had gasped and broken into thunderous cheers at the omen of a better future. Lincoln's address had been brief and grave; but the spectators, hopeful that the war was drawing to a close, forgot his mood in joyous celebration. Chase's funereal dress seemed out of keeping with the spirit of the occasion, but no one paid him much heed after the brief ceremony.¹

Two days later police tried without success to restrain the exuberant crowds at the Inaugural Ball, held in the new wing of the Patent Office. Like charging cavalry, hungry visitors rushed the supper tables,

laden with the confectionery oddments of a celebrated Washington caterer. Hallways were soon spotted with water spilled by unsteady waiters, dresses were spoiled by punch or melted ices, and suffocating dust showered down upon the dance floor, turning the black frock coats of the gentlemen an unsightly pearl gray. Not until the arrival of the presidential party was a measure of order restored.

Mrs. Lincoln was wearing diamond earrings and necklace and a splendid white satin gown trimmed in deep lace. The nimbus of flowers around her hair and her open, troubled face, grown quite round as she aged, made her look like a discontented madonna; but even Mary Todd Lincoln, embittered and disillusioned as she was, was not able to escape some measure of satisfaction at the occasion. As she glanced over the immense crowds, she may have noticed that there was present no Kate Chase Sprague to provide reporters with an opportunity for unflattering comparisons. Truly she was the leading lady that night, and one New York newspaper would report: "Nobody could mistake Mrs. Lincoln. She was every inch a Presidentess."²

Noticing that the Spragues and Chase were rarely seen in public that social season, reporters speculated that they were sulking about some difference with the President over patronage and, therefore, had refused to come to the Inaugural Ball. The truth was that Chase was in no mood for parties that winter, and he had retired gloomily into protracted mourning for a dead sister. Kate, if she chose, could have offered the excuse that she was expecting a baby in little more than three months. Although disliking confinement during the height of the social season, she certainly did not regret missing the ceremony at the Capitol or the disorderly ball at the Patent Office, where her husband had encamped with his soldiers in the first dark days of the war. Since that April four years past, many changes had taken place: the Patent Building had a new wing; she had a husband; and her father now occupied a new position of eminence. But none of the changes — architectural, social, or political — had come up to expectations, and Kate was glad that she did not have to face them all at once.

On the surface William Sprague seemed to have more reason to rejoice than the other members of his family. The war was almost over;

soon the blockade would be lifted, and his difficulties in supplying his cotton empire would be at an end. Certainly Sprague had more reason than Kate or Chase to hide his real feelings. Harris Hoyt had confessed, and army authorities were even then considering whether the principals in the Texas Adventure should be charged with a violation of the laws of war or with treason.

Washington did not share the spring melancholy of the Chase household. Early in April came the stupendous news that Richmond had fallen, and on Palm Sunday the Northern capital learned that General Lee had surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to General Grant. A wave of hysterical relief swept the North. Four years of war were over.

Chase, a man short on celebrations but long on politics, bestirred himself to think beyond the surrender of the Southern armies, for he knew that the war of the Radical Republicans was far from over. For months, like medieval Scholastics debating the ways to salvation, Radicals and conservatives had raised their voices in heated dispute about whether the Southern states had committed suicide by secession or were still in the Union. The Radicals held that the Southern states had reverted to the status of conquered territories and, therefore, that their suffrage laws could be dictated by Congress. Toward the whole knotty argument President Lincoln displayed the indifference of a priest in the provinces trying to keep his parish going. The question was "merely [a] pernicious abstraction," he said. The Southern states were out of their proper practical relation to the Union; the sole object now was to restore them to it. "Finding themselves safely at home, it would be utterly immaterial whether they had ever been abroad." As for the question of suffrage, Lincoln observed, he personally favored giving the vote to intelligent Negroes and to those who were Union veterans, but his overriding objective was to recognize that the Southern states were in the Union.³

Chase, like his Radical friends, favored forcing Negro suffrage upon the South; and on the afternoon of Good Friday he went out for a carriage ride with Nettie, intending to have himself left at the White House for a private talk with the President about his views.⁴ But as

he drove about the city, green with spring and gaily decorated with the flags and bunting of victory, he made up his mind to postpone the call; and he and Nettie rode back home together in the warm dusk. There would be ample time in the future to plead his case, he told himself.

Chase was mistaken. Sometime after he went to bed, a servant burst into his room with the news that the President had been shot. In a few minutes a Treasury official arrived with the report that Secretary Seward had been attacked and that the lives of other government officials were thought to be in danger.

"It was a night of horrors," Chase wrote in his diary afterward. "My first impulse was to rise immediately and go to the President, whom I could not yet believe to have been fatally wounded; but reflecting that I could not possibly be of any service, and should probably be in the way of those who could, I resolved to wait for morning and further intelligence. In a little while the guard came (for it was supposed that I was one of the destined victims), and their heavy tramp, tramp, was heard under my window all night. . . ." ⁵

Chase rose at dawn after a nearly sleepless night. The sky was dark, and a heavy rain was falling. He hurried through the silent city, past limp, sodden flags and black streets, to the hushed house across from Ford's Theater; but by the time he got there, the President was dead. Walking on to Seward's house, he learned that both the Secretary and his son were alive, although badly injured by the knife of an assailant.

After a few minutes Chase left to make arrangements for the ceremony that was to make Andrew Johnson the seventeenth President of the United States. Later that morning, when he met old Francis P. Blair and his son Montgomery outside the hotel parlor where Johnson and a dozen men were waiting, Chase impulsively greeted them warmly; and side by side the three of them went inside for the inauguration. Shocked out of his customary habits and hatreds by the death of Lincoln, Chase decided to bury old animosities. "The schemes of politicians will now adjust themselves to the new conditions. I want no part in them," he said. ⁶

The horror and excitement in the North abruptly died away into

stunned silence. Newspaper offices, barrooms, and streets were deserted; victory flags were torn down and replaced by crepe. On Easter Sunday, a day set aside for rejoicing, millions of heads were bowed in grief. The death of the wise and patient Abraham Lincoln was a warning that the dry, pestilent winds of hatred would still blow across the land, that violence would not end with the capitulation of armies and the stacking of arms.

On the day of the funeral over six hundred mourners filed quietly into the dimly lit East Room of the White House and took their places on the raised steps that stood along three sides of the room. Mary Lincoln, hysterical with grief, was not among the seven women present, but Kate Chase Sprague was there. She was expecting her baby in two months; but even though she had to stand throughout, it did not occur to her to miss the occasion. She had those four long hours to think about the possibilities of a brighter future for herself and her father. Gone forever was Abraham Lincoln, who had stood like a dark shadow over them since the day he won the Republican nomination in 1860. Standing a few rows in front of Kate was Chief Justice Chase, staring ahead with no sign of emotion. Reporters marked him down as the most distinguished-looking man present.⁷

Shortly after Lincoln was buried, Chase left Washington with Nettie and a small party of friends for an extended tour of the South. The Chief Justice, in addition to his other duties, was required to preside over the circuit court of appeals for an area including Virginia and North Carolina; and it seemed entirely proper that he should want to have a firsthand look at the area. And, as one of the most important officials of the Federal government, he had legitimate claim to an introduction to the entire South. But the tour soon blew up a storm of controversy as Chase, apparently forgetting all about his renunciation of politics, gave it an unmistakably partisan flavor.⁸

When the Chief Justice made a widely publicized speech in Charleston calling for the enfranchisement of the Negro, the archaic Mr. Bates bristled angrily. "Chase [is] animated by a restless and unreasoning

appetite for distinction, and so [yearns] after the Presidency, that he would stoop to any thing which promised success," he growled.

"Poor man! The eagerness of his appetite makes him eat poison, and if I am any prophet, he will die of it."⁹

Mr. Bates was not far from the truth. Salmon P. Chase had yet to learn what that shrewd back-country politician, Abraham Lincoln, had known all along: that the people would not condone in the Supreme Court what they were willing to overlook in the Treasury. Even an influential Northern newspaper which had come out for Negro suffrage disavowed the transformation of the innocent Southern tour into a Radical stumping campaign. "The whole tenor of [Chase's] speech was that of a firebrand thrown gratuitously into a difficult and complicated problem. . . . His tour through the canebrakes, cotton, and rice fields of the South was only a part of a grand scheme . . . [to] place him in the Presidential chair," declared the newspaper severely.¹⁰

Chase's outspoken dogmatism on the subject of the Negro made him singularly unpopular with the white population of the South. It was said that when one beautiful Southern woman was presented to him, she extended her hand and said, "Mr. Chase, you see before you a rebel who has not been reconstructed."

"Madam," Chase was supposed to have said with a courtly bow, "you are so perfectly constructed that any reconstruction is altogether impossible."¹¹

The incident — and the only witticism ever attributed to Chase — is undoubtedly apocryphal. Unfortunately, it was not in his nature to greet the white Southerner with either tact or humor. Even if he had wanted to be understanding as well as righteous, he would have failed. Like a suit that was too tight, his lofty self-esteem and eternal virtue made him stiff and unbending, as if fearful of stooping to a joke. Always right with motives pure, he argued rather than persuaded, insisted rather than suggested. Not even many Northerners liked him.

Cut off from regular communication with the North during most of his trip, Chase worried about the long delays between letters from Kate. Late in June Sprague sent him a telegram announcing the arrival of a grandson, and a few days later Kate wrote that she planned to

name him after her father. Chase replied immediately, "I long to see the dear boy, whom you must name William. It is natural that you should want to name him after me in some way; but my only tolerable name is my surname; and William is not only a better one; but it is the name of one to whom *your first duty* belongs. . . . It should be borne by his first boy. So please consider that 'case adjudged.'" ¹²

Kate had to agree, and so her son was christened William Sprague V.

Secretary of War Stanton did his best to make the event a happy one, at least for the father. At the end of May, Stanton had been presented with a report from Joseph Holt, the Judge Advocate General, concerning Harris Hoyt, being held in New York for his part in the Texas Adventure. "It is urged by the counsel for Mr. Hoyt that he is suffering in health by his confinement, and that, in as much as the other parties (Sprague, Reynolds, and others) who put the operation on foot, furnished the capital to carry it through and were to make the profits, if any, have not been arrested, he who has made a full confession should not be longer held without proceedings being commenced against those equally implicated. . . ."

A few days later the Judge Advocate again urged Hoyt's parole, and it was finally granted. Hoyt was to continue to report to the headquarters of General Dix periodically; in case a trial was ordered he would serve as the government's key witness.¹³

About a week before the birth of Kate's baby, Holt transmitted to Stanton all the records relating to the Texas Adventure, including Hoyt's full confession and the letters William Sprague had written to serve the Texan as unofficial trade permits. Holt told his superior that Hoyt ". . . expressly declares William Sprague to have been cognizant of the progress of the business and to have advised and aided it to the utmost of his powers.

"It is stated by William Sprague that the object was to aid Union citizens in Texas, and obtain information for the Government; but no one else connected with the venture seems to have viewed it in that light, and Byron Sprague, his partner, who, as William Sprague owns, had special charge of the speculation, plainly describes it as undertaken

to get out cotton." Holt concluded by calling attention to General Dix's statement that he had the two witnesses necessary for conviction for treason.¹⁴

Once he had all the information before him, Secretary Stanton acted promptly. Byron Sprague was released from parole, and Harris Hoyt's parole was enlarged to permit him to visit his family in Chicago. Stanton's generosity was a sign that there might never be a trial of the Texas Adventurers. Sprague watched the incalculable Secretary of War and speculated about his motives. Possibly Stanton did not want to embarrass his old friend Chase by airing the scandal in court, or perhaps he did not want to disturb the phalanx of Radical power by bringing down public humiliation upon the family of the Chief Justice. Undoubtedly, Stanton was not displeased at the prospect of having a United States Senator in debt to him. The Secretary of War was a man who would realize that in the game of political chess a knight from Rhode Island was worth far more than a pawn from Texas. Whatever his reasons, the Secretary of War acted with great caution. It may be that he was the one who removed Hoyt's full confession from the War Department files. At any rate, that key document disappeared forever shortly after being transmitted to his office. Sprague observed that General Dix had left the Department of the East to become president of the Union Pacific Railway. With the prosecutors, defendants, and witnesses scattered, it looked as though the Texas Adventure might be forgotten, except, of course, by Edwin M. Stanton and William Sprague.¹⁵

Oblivious of those happy events, Chase returned north up the Mississippi River. From Fortress Monroe, he had gone along the coast as far south as Cuba, then west to New Orleans, and finally up through the heart of the South by way of the Mississippi. For the first time in his life he had seen the Negroes' homeland and their former masters, and he had had a look at the poverty which more than force or sentiment was working to make the two races equal. He had seen abandoned plantations, empty rows of slave quarters, and Freedmen's Villages, where thousands of dislocated Negroes huddled together in poverty and filth. The South was empty breastworks, cemeteries, deso-

late cotton fields, and homes swept bare of furnishings; it was forlorn Negroes wandering homeless over the countryside and Confederate veterans returning to stare at ruins that had once been home. Chase had seen the best Southern lands fall into Northern hands, and he had seen the best Southern homes appropriated with a bold air of finality by Northerners taking advantage of the temporary absence of old occupants. He had met Southerners who would not admit defeat and others who, like the carpetbaggers, fattened on it.

Upon his return Chase flung the same answer in the teeth of desolation as he had when he had started: Negro suffrage was the panacea. But the seeds of doubt had been planted.¹⁶

Upon arriving in Illinois, Chase and his friends feigned surprise when told that a formidable party was being organized in the North for the purpose of forcing enfranchisement of the Negro on the defeated South. Nothing except his new grandson could have pleased Chase more, but it was unlikely that the news was a surprise. Chase knew that the Radical Republicans were as determined to write the terms of peace as they had been to provide the program and heroes of military victory. Was it merely habit that had prompted him to act as their spokesman on his Southern tour? Or was he riding a popular crest that would mend his political fortunes at the next Republican nomination convention?

At the time Chase appeared to have nothing more on his mind than a reunion with his family, and he hurried off to Rhode Island for a vacation.¹⁷ He was as proud of little Willie as Sprague himself and happy to end the long separation from Kate; but, as he watched his daughter day after day, he had reason to feel vaguely troubled. Kate's long illness and pregnancy had worn her nerves thin, and she seemed restless and discontented. Perhaps both Chase and Sprague hoped that the plans for the new Sprague mansion at Narragansett Pier would make her happy.

Kate had been very dissatisfied during her first summer in Rhode Island when Sprague had refused to take her to Europe. She had tried to content herself with an occasional visit to Newport, that quaint Colonial port that had blossomed into a fashionable summer resort; but when she left its narrow cobblestone streets and the avenues of

palatial cottages stretching along the beach beyond the heart of the old city, she had to return to the large murky town house in Providence where Sprague's mother lived, or to one of the shabby, comfortable old farmhouses in Rhode Island which the Spragues used for summer homes. Neither alternative suited her. She was not particularly interested in Providence society (Rhode Island was, after all, the smallest state in the Union), and she thought simple rustic living a sign of defective taste. Why should she retire to the nullity of an ancient decaying farm when heat made Washington and Providence unbearable? With her husband's money she could build a magnificent country estate, more splendid than anything in Newport. There she would begin her second national campaign on a cool veranda, facing a vista of tailored gardens and lawns reaching to the sea. One day her house would be the summer capital of the nation.

There had been no indecision about where her mansion was to be built. Across Narragansett Bay from Newport, there was a long green finger of land jutting south into the Atlantic, where the harsh gray rocks of the mainland melted away into lush forests, long stretches of warm sand, and, along the middle of the peninsula near the little village called Narragansett Pier, a confused tumble of red rocks. About a mile north of the village on a gentle ridge of land overlooking the bay was one of the Spragues' summer homes, built on the site of the Indian chief Canonchet's camp. Kate saw to it that her husband got full title to the property from his brother; and, while she was awaiting the birth of her baby, she began drawing up plans for her great manor.¹⁸

At first the project absorbed her energy; but when her father returned to his work in Washington, she was no longer satisfied with blueprints and drawings. Turning Willie over to the care of nurses, she went back to her frenetic social life, and before long Sprague had to write Chase that she was overdoing at tenpins and bathing and was not well. Chase began to grow alarmed about her health, for in nearly every letter since her marriage she had complained of being ill. He wrote her about the quiet life he was living in Washington and urged her to rest more, go to fewer parties, and get less exercise. Finally, Sprague sent her back to Washington, saying that he hoped the warm

climate of the capital would restore her health. He did not mention that he thought Kate would be less restless once she was near her father.¹⁹

Life at Sixth and E streets was not easy that fall and winter. Kate's celebrated tact and graciousness were not matched by her patience; and in spite of her father's gentle lectures about Christian forbearance, she exploded with exasperation more and more frequently. At times even gentle Nettie irritated Kate, and her father had to admonish her, "... be *very* kind to her and very considerate for her. Let your thought supply her thoughtlessness."²⁰ Usually in the parlor and ball-room Kate was a model of composure, reserving her fury for the intimacy of the family circle; but, as time went on, she could not contain her temper even in public and even with political friends like Charles Sumner, her idea of a model gentleman and statesman. William Sprague, whom a fortune had made neither a gentleman nor a statesman, soon became the chief victim of her outbursts, and it was not long before their quarrels became public.

One of their most celebrated arguments occurred at a state dinner early in the administration of President Johnson, when Sprague began drinking wine freely. Knowing that he was unpredictable when drunk, one of his neighbors interrupted him as he reached out to refill his glass, saying, "I would not take more if I were you!" Another added, "There are a pair of bright eyes looking at you."

"Damn them!" roared Sprague. "They can't see me!"

Kate, radiant in anger and pink satin, leaned forward and stared contemptuously at her husband. "Yes, they *can* see you," she hissed, "and they are heartily ashamed of you."²¹

Gossips in the capital began to nod knowingly over their teacups when Kate arrived at a party with her father rather than Sprague.

Kate's anger weighed heavily on Sprague. The self-respect he had failed to win on the battlefield he had hoped to win at a temporary altar at Sixth and E streets. He had confided to Chase that his marriage was to save him from the dark forces that were consuming his health and respectability; but when his marriage failed, when Kate began to rage and insult him, he retreated to his sullen pleasures of old — drink-

ing, ill health, business, and other women, those women of easy virtue whose cheap perfume filled Washington hotel lobbies and dark, curtained parlors. If Kate suspected the nature of the "business" that kept her husband away from home late at night, she was only disgusted. If Chase knew, he gave no sign. Yearning over Sprague as though he were his son, he praised his occasional Senate speeches, sought out his company, and urged Kate to take pride in him.²²

In mid-April of 1866, Kate, Nettie, Willie, and a nurse sailed for England and the continent. At one time Kate had postponed her trip because neither her father nor her husband would accompany her; but now, although she reluctantly bade her father good-by, her farewells to Sprague were cool. She seemed entirely satisfied to plan her travels without him.

With the departure of tense, hot-tempered Kate, the lives of Sprague and Chase settled into an easy, comfortable routine; and, perhaps to their surprise, they found themselves contented, almost happy. Chase would awaken early in the morning and lie in bed listening to the muffled sounds of the stirring city—the milkman moving along E Street and far in the distance a newsboy calling, "*Daily Chron-i-cle!*" Finally he would arise to write a letter to his daughters, telling them how pleasantly he and Sprague were passing the spring. Each evening they would meet at the Capitol and go for a ride before dinner, and occasionally in the evening an old friend, like General Garfield, would call to talk politics or play a game or two of chess. As the weather grew warm, Chase wrote Kate: ". . . I have been strongly tempted to seek cooler latitude; but I hate to leave the Governor here alone in the house. We get along together well. I only regret that I cannot be of more use to him."²³

Not until late summer was their pleasant life shattered by the appearance of the short notice in the *New York World*: "It is reported in Providence, R. I., that the wife of a (not very) distinguished United States Senator is about to apply for a divorce." The rumor immediately swept through the Northern press, and the entire country was invited to speculate about what had happened to one of the most publicized marriages of the decade. Sprague sailed shortly afterward to join Kate

and Nettie in Switzerland, leaving Chase to face the scandal alone. He was frantic. "I hate to touch such filth in any way but I suppose that so extreme an outrage on all . . . must be returned in some way," he told his friend J. W. Schuckers. "Of course I can do nothing until Gov. Sprague comes home. . . . Feeling as I do I am not fit . . . to suggest what should be said. Only let not Katie's name be in any way mentioned."²⁴

A tactful denial, probably inspired by Schuckers, appeared in a Providence newspaper shortly afterward and was widely reprinted by the malicious press.²⁵ Chase fervently hoped that by the time the Spragues returned, the furor would be forgotten, and he carefully said nothing about the scandal in his letters to Kate and Nettie.

As the months of separation lengthened, Chase grew lonely, and he waited anxiously for each letter from abroad. To Nettie, who wrote with great charm, illustrating her letters with marginal pen and ink drawings, he wrote delightedly: "Your last letter was your chef d'oeuvre. . . . You must write an illustrated book of travel!" But occasionally he found fault with his daughters' penmanship; and in his almost illegible scrawl he would send across the ocean a stirring call to them to freshen their hands with new discipline. "Spur up your Pegasus and make him keep step," he would admonish. "Let Pegasus use his wings but do you use the reins." Nettie bore his complaints meekly, but not so Kate. She had never been able to bear criticism from her father, no matter how mild; and as she became more and more estranged from her husband, her sensitivity deepened, as if she loved her father more fiercely the less she liked Sprague. Chase finally wrote Nettie defensively: "Kate seems to think that I *criticize* too much. But I can't quite agree . . . because I think it not altogether important that you should be entirely satisfied as long as any degree of perfection remains unattained."²⁶

His apology was not acknowledged by Kate for two months. When he received her next letter, he realized the reason for her long silence: he had forgotten her twenty-sixth birthday in August. Years later she would tell him, "I fear I am a good deal of a child about such things yet, though yearning for love is hardly one of the childish things one

would wish to put away." Knowing that he had deeply offended her, Chase wrote immediately: "It was a mean thing that your birthday was not commended at least by a letter written on it. . . . I am quite ashamed of that [thoughtlessness] which leads to the neglect of such [important] occasions. I am sure that the neglect does not imply lack of warmest affection — but I quite agree that outward expressions . . . are more taken than the [assumption] and I mean to reform. . . ." But the very next year, misled by Sprague's faulty memory, Chase would once again forget Kate's birthday.²⁷

Perhaps Kate was troubled by the suspicion that he had neglected her because he was vacationing with Mrs. Eastman at Beverly that August. If she was curious about his visit there, she found almost no details in her father's letters to satisfy her questions. Certain newspapers, however, began to speculate that Chase was about to marry a widow, a Mrs. M. or a Mrs. E. Disturbed, Chase wrote his public spokesman Mr. Schuckers, telling him to contradict all reports "until you hear from me that I have actually determined to remain a widower. Why should I think of anything else, being a grandfather? Ought there not be a law against grandfathers being married to any but grandmothers?" The unsteady tone of his denial may have been prompted by the astounding news that the unapproachable, high-souled Senator Charles Sumner was getting married. "I should not [have] believed it if I had it not from his own hand," Chase told Kate. Undoubtedly Kate, too, was stunned. A towering monument of dignity and erudition, Sumner was a Senator by nature, a Senator of commanding skill on the floor of the Senate and in the committee room, but also a Senator on the street and in the parlor, at dinner and at tea. If there was a private Charles Sumner, few had seen him; and his marriage after years of splendid isolation seemed like the shocking anthropomorphism of an American institution.²⁸

Probably, if Kate had not stood determinedly in the way of her father's remarriage, he, too, might have married that year. "But for the looks of the thing in an old gentleman like me, & the feeling of Katie &, I dare say, you too . . . who knows what I might not have been tempted to the consenting!" Chase later told Nettie. "It *is* rather soli-

tary this life that I lead." Her father's loneliness did not seem to touch Kate. She would allow no rivals, and people in Washington said she went so far as to drive Mrs. Eastman from her home with her rudeness. Kate did not mind what people said. Her marriage had been for her father; he was to remain single for her.²⁹

By winter Chase was fretful. He had held no court in his district since spring, and time had passed slowly after Sprague's departure. At last in December, 1866, the Spragues' ship steamed into New York Harbor to put an end to his depression. Much to his disappointment, Nettie had decided to stay on in Dresden to study art and languages. Assured that Kate would be at his side always, Chase tried to resign himself to his younger daughter's decision with good grace, but he was to find it very difficult.³⁰ Nettie's irrepressible gaiety cheered her father, making him forget the burdens of office and ambition. Even Sprague, usually a gloomy, solitary man, fell under her spell, and with her he was a different man than he ever was with Kate. He teased Nettie and laughed with her, brought her little presents and spent hours taking her sight-seeing. As long as she was at Sixth and E streets, her serenity and quiet happiness lessened the tensions in the house. Without her the winter was not going to be pleasant.

At first Chase was optimistic. "It was a delight to see Katie & Willie & the Governor so well & in such good spirits," Chase told Nettie. "The boy is in excellent condition and seems to take to his grandfather very decidedly." But the homecoming soon proved disappointing. Sprague immediately hurried off to Providence on "business," and Willie fell ill with the croup. "Christmas seems likely to be dull with us," Chase told Nettie sadly. "I wish I had more of the German in me, then I should know what to say & what to give & what to do to make everybody happy. I want to, but don't know how."³¹

Willie began to have violent tantrums, which, Chase said, were like April storms "soon come soon gone." ". . . strange to say, especially when one remembers the gentle and even tempers of his pa and ma, he has shown a will of his own," he told Nettie. But he could not always dismiss the mood of the family with wry jokes. He confided that Sprague "is pretty well this winter, but suffers still . . . [from]

Dyspepsia. Last night he felt so badly that he could not come down. He takes more to *the boy* than to anything or anybody else. No woman could have a kinder or more indulgent husband than he has been to Katie. Sometimes I feel she don't feel it quite enough; though I know that she loves him truly & is proud of him." ³² Nettie had seen enough of her sister and Sprague to know what lay beneath her father's words—the angry scenes and the long gloomy days of bitter silence afterward.

In spite of her husband, Kate seemed to be enjoying herself that winter. At first she had gone out little; but in January, when Sprague's young cousins Susie and Sarah Hoyt came from Rhode Island to enjoy the height of the social season, she was swept back into the millrace of parties and balls. Rarely did she get home before three in the morning, and often it was four before her carriage drew up in front of the darkened Sprague mansion. Sprague grumbled that the late hours were ruining her health, but she ignored him.³³

Resplendent in her new Worth gowns from Paris, Kate was the regent of Washington society. Ladies, quivering with appreciation of their social eminence, looked at her and sighed enviously. "Her devotees were innumerable, and no queen ever held a more imperious sway," wrote one of the legion of prosy autobiographers in Washington after the war. "Mrs. Sprague's receptions continue to be a prominent feature of society in Washington during every session. Gifted with beauty and brilliant mental qualities, her reign is undisputed," said another. It was rumored that even the mistress of the White House paid her the unwilling tribute of changing her reception day so that it would not conflict with Kate's day at home.

As one admiring reporter testified, Kate was the only woman in the national capital who was not overshadowed by rich brocade and diamonds. "Not a gown, not a chain, not an ornament ever attracted attention except inasmuch as it shared her beauty. . . . She had more the air of a great lady than any woman I ever saw. She could make all the Astors look like fishwomen beside her." A governor of Ohio named the loveliest rose in his famous garden for her, and the national capital slavishly followed her dictates in fashion. Even though Chase

did not like Kate's new European hairdo, he had to admit that never before had she looked so handsome.³⁴

February brought John Hay, one of her old admirers, back to Washington from Paris during a brief interlude between assignments with the diplomatic corps. On a damp, drizzling day he rode up to Willard's to find "the same dead-beats hanging around the office, the same long-haired listless loafers moving gloomily up and down pensively expectorating." But he was to find that Washington was no longer the city it had been during the war. "The town is gayer than you ever saw it," he wrote Nicolay with delight. "Balls nearly every night—receptions without number." As Henry Adams was to discover upon his return a year later, "the social side of Washington was to be taken for granted as three-fourths of existence. . . . Politics and reform became the detail, and waltzing the profession."³⁵

Hay, wearing his newly acquired Parisian hauteur, was dazzled by one of Kate's parties. "The ladies who danced the cotillion . . . had their hair powdered *à la marquise*. I have never seen so beautiful and picturesque a roomful. Some of the most striking were the hostess herself (with whom I danced), [and] the Hoyts [Sprague's cousins]. . . ." Apparently Hay admired Kate's brains as well as her beauty, for when Secretary of State Seward offered him a position as his secretary, he declined after consulting her. If the Chief Justice himself depended on Kate's judgment, a rising young diplomat could afford to take her opinions seriously.³⁶

At the end of February, Lent finally brought down the curtain on the glittering pageant, and the annual emigration from the capital began. Back to Rhode Island went the young Hoyts and Sprague's mother, who had come to survey the matrimonial estate of her son and daughter-in-law. Kate began packing for another trip to Europe, this time accompanied by Susie and Sarah Hoyt and their brother William. To avoid gossip Chase may have wanted Sprague to go along as originally planned, but at the last minute he decided to stay in Rhode Island to help his friends retain control of the state legislature, the body that was soon to consider electing him to another term in the Senate. Chase told Nettie that the Governor "does not talk much but [seems]

confident of the result. Katie of course wants him to remain Senator & so do I." ³⁷ Sprague's excuse apparently suited the national gossips, for there were no stories about a divorce of the Spragues that summer.

Kate had not been in Europe long before legends sprang up about her wealth and extravagance. When she paid three thousand dollars in gold for five yards of point lace, said to have been too expensive for Victoria and Eugénie, the impressed French merchant had the lace photographed, explaining that he wanted the picture on the wall of the *Compagnie des Indes* as evidence of the transcendent beauty of French fabrics and the liberality of American women of taste. ³⁸

At the same time, back in Washington, her father was worrying about how he was to pay A. T. Stewart a small bill that had been collecting interest charges for several years. At one time Chase may have thought that he had solved his financial problems the day he gave Kate away to Sprague, but by the summer of 1867, he had realized his mistake. At first his son-in-law had seemed willing to bridge the troublesome gap between Chase's income and standard of living. Sprague wrote the checks for most of the expenses of their household and the other costly tangibles necessary for the Chase political campaign, but he gave early warning of the trouble that was to come. While on his honeymoon, Sprague sharply questioned a bill for household expenses, asking Chase if he were to pay half even when away from the capital. Perhaps he was overly sensitive about such matters at that time because of public rumors that Kate had married him only for his money; but, for some reason, as time went on, his resentment of Chase's financial dependence only deepened. After the failure of the Pomeroy circular, he abruptly stopped paying his father-in-law's political debts, partly because Chase had become a political liability perhaps, but possibly for other reasons as well. By then he had reason to resent Kate's overbearing devotion to her father, which seemed to exclude him from the family circle entirely; and money being his pride and strength, he took that means of asserting himself. Sprague gladly offered to lend Chase nine thousand dollars for Nettie's education abroad, although he would have to wait years for repayment; but he indicated plainly that he was less pleased to pay Chase's other outstanding accounts, which

had been collecting interest for years as if Chase had washed his hands of them.³⁹

Sprague may have meant to excuse his churlishness when he told Chase that he had suffered from some "disastrous" speculations after the war, but Chase could not have taken the remark very seriously after having seen the extent and prosperity of his son-in-law's vast empire during his trip South. It may have occurred to him that the real reason was that Sprague was jealous, envious of the exclusive bond between him and Kate. Chase did what he could, at least he thought he did what he could, to turn Kate's affection to her husband; and, casting about for some means of paying his numberless small bills, he made efforts to free himself from Sprague financially so that he would not contribute to the widening breach between them.⁴⁰

Against his will, Chase found himself being sucked back into his dangerous private entente with Jay Cooke. A year after becoming Chief Justice, he wrote the banker: "How would it do to sell \$20,000 of my bonds in your hands and put the money as capital in your firm? I rather think I should like to be a sleeping partner of yours now that I am no longer Secretary. I see nothing disagreeable about it except for the fact that I can render very little service beyond the small capital contributed. . . . If you don't think well of this you must continue to be my factor and do the best you can for me with my means under your control."⁴¹

Cooke did not share Chase's illusions about his financial ability; but, making a try at tact, the financier offered to make him the London representative of the company, a post singularly difficult to combine with Supreme Court duties. Disappointed, Chase replied that the London position would require "keeping so wide awake" that he would not be able to pose as a sleeping partner. Although he dropped that proposition, he began angling for the presidency of the Union Pacific Railway and later the Central Pacific. Chase did not mean to resign from the Supreme Court to take either position. The touchy relationship between large corporate interests and the government was a relatively new problem, and legal ethics of the time might not have prevented the Chief Justice from becoming president of a railroad or a

silent partner in a large banking house. Still, as Jay Cooke knew, a widening of Chase's business activities might constrict his political future, and probably he used his considerable influence with the Chief Justice to persuade him to give up those peripheral aspirations and content himself with what guarded financial favors came his way.⁴²

Cooke continued to aid Chase with investments, collect his interest, and oblige him with an occasional loan. The financier thoughtfully made certain that Chase's business transactions maintained a high rate of profit without reference to the ups and downs of the market, and by the summer of 1867, Chase was able to anticipate a private income greater than his official salary. Truthfully he could say to his friend, "How many you daily make happy, if not otherwise yet by your cheerful words and ways." ⁴³

Not least among the reasons for Cooke's solicitude was the possibility, that persistent possibility, that Chase might one day be President; but also he was grateful for the favors Chase had heaped upon him in the past, the payment in hand resulting from their friendship. His small kindness cost him no discomfort, for he was now immensely rich, rich enough to replace The Cedars with a Renaissance palace called Ogontz, a vast stone pile with a five-story tower, a private theater and art gallery, and guest rooms to accommodate twenty-five people at a time. Mindful of his debt to Chase, Cooke commissioned a special portrait of the Chief Justice to hang in his new house; and, mindful of the uncertainties of the future, he had another made of General Grant.⁴⁴

Suspecting after Chase's Southern tour that his ambitions were slumbering rather than dead, his political enemies began to publish reports that while Secretary of the Treasury he had grown rich at the expense of the public. Chase realized that the timing of the rumors was not accidental: by the summer of 1867, the unofficial presidential campaign was well under way in anticipation of the nominating conventions, and his opponents were seizing their opportunity to stir up doubts about his integrity. As was usual when his personal finances were under attack, Chase, with a guilty start, sat down to write Jay Cooke a letter, saying, "I am glad to receive any kindness from you not of a pecuniary

nature. . . ." He enclosed a check for \$2448 to cover the current deficit in his account and scolded his friend for presuming to pay one of his hotel bills.⁴⁵ By then Jay Cooke was familiar with the seasonal quality of Chase's conscience, and he may have suspected that, once the baying hounds of the press turned on someone else, his tone would change.

Chase, however, had misgivings about his relationship with Cooke even when the press was not asking embarrassing questions about his private affairs. Once, after a chance meeting with the banker on a train from New York, Chase told Kate, "He was full of finance and friendship. I like the last best. He expressed a great deal of gratitude to me, for the great opportunities I had given him. . . ." Cooke's effusion made Chase uncomfortable. ". . . candor obliged me to say that he was more indebted to his own activity and zeal . . . than to me, for those qualities alone had secured my choice of him, as Loan agent. . . . How is it?" he pondered uneasily. "Does a man owe gratitude to another . . . for employment or office, when the selection is prompted by strong questions of public duty rather than by personal regard?"⁴⁶ The truth was that neither Chase nor the public at large was entirely convinced by his arguments.

Desperately Chase tried to reconcile the irreconcilable pieces of his life. Rightly or wrongly he felt he had to continue his grand scale of living if he wanted the Presidency, and yet the only means he had to finance it after Sprague disappointed his expectations seemed suicidal politically. He wanted Kate's happiness and in part he wanted the Presidency to satisfy her; but, in giving in to her passionate ambition, he was tightening the bonds between them, estranging her from Sprague, and causing strife in their household. And he was fomenting strife in his own heart, torn between conscience and ambition. *Pro Christo et Patria*, said the Chase family crest, which Kate sent her father from Ireland. For Christ and Country!⁴⁷ That was the way Chase liked to think of his endeavors. For Christ and Country!

CHAPTER II

With Malice Toward Some

DURING the summer of 1867, while Kate was vacationing in Europe, the Radical Republicans and President Andrew Johnson were fighting a political war that eventually was to jeopardize her marriage, her husband's reputation, and her father's political future.

For a short time after Lincoln's death Chase's smug friends had been convinced that their long siege of the Federal government had ended in triumph: Radicals Thaddeus Stevens and Ben Butler dominated the House; and the Senate was under the spell of blustery Ben Wade, Charles Sumner, and the elegant charlatan from New York, Roscoe Conkling. In the Supreme Court was their old warrior Salmon P. Chase; and now in the White House, the last pocket of stubborn resistance to the crusade, was the man who had once thundered, "Treason is a crime and must be punished. . . . Treason must be made infamous, and traitors must be impoverished." No more meek slogans of forgiveness from the President! "Johnson, we have faith in you," crowed Senator Ben Wade. "By the gods, there will be no trouble now in running the government."¹ Cheering triumphantly, the Radicals went off to plan the chastisement of the South.

The victorious North was to wage a harsh, vindictive peace on its former enemies, they decreed. The defeated states were to be dragged behind the Republican chariot, treated as alien, conquered lands, their leaders punished, their property confiscated, their people ruled by bayonets until the South could be safely liberated to an invincible Republican Party. And, of course, the Negro was to be given the vote. The South was to be allowed one small belated victory: the Radicals, who had once taken up their muskets to prove that secession was a legal impossibility, now cheerfully conceded the Confederates' argument to

the contrary: the Southern states had indeed seceded and were now subject to the laws of war. ". . . by treating them as an outside, conquered people, they can be refused admission to the Union unless they voluntarily do what we demand," argued the malevolent Thaddeus Stevens.²

When those fierce-tempered men marched upon President Johnson with their program, he appeared polite and interested; but a few weeks after taking office he unexpectedly made up his mind to go another way, and under his direction the Southern states were hurried through the formalities of reorganization without being required to give the Negro the franchise. The war was fought to save the Union, said Johnson. Four terrible years of war were not fought merely for the *status quo*, the Radicals cried. Wailing about the proscription of Negroes at the Southern polls while overlooking it in the North, they refused to recognize Johnson's program. Congress passed its own reconstruction bills, the President vetoed them, and passions mounted.

Unfortunately for the country, Andrew Johnson was not a tactful man. Tenacious, scrupulously honest, courageous in the face of personal danger, he had integrity but not art. Lincoln, wise as an old hunting dog, had been a match for scheming generals, a divided and devious Cabinet, and a resentful Congress; but Johnson lacked his subtlety, his irresistible chuckle, and his miraculous understanding of the human heart. With the death of Lincoln, unhappy Andrew Johnson suddenly found himself the head of a party to which he did not belong. The majority of the Republicans in Congress at that time, however, were conservatives, willing to give support to his reconstruction views. But, in the acid political fight that ensued, Johnson's majority abruptly dissolved; and after their sweeping triumph at the polls in 1866, the Radicals, with a two-thirds majority in Congress, were able to ignore the intolerable "dead dog in the White House." The President's progress toward reconciliation was thrown over for their plan. All the newly organized Southern state governments except one were pushed aside as Congress chopped the South into five military districts to be governed by the army. To take the army out of Johnson's hands, Congress decreed that all military orders had to be issued through a general

who could not be removed by the President, and, for good measure, passed the Tenure of Office Act, declaring that the President could not remove civil officials, including his own Cabinet members, without the approval of the Senate. In other words, the Radicals declared that the President thereafter was no longer to be President.

The shadow of the mysterious Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, darkened Washington and lengthened across the land. In his soft, feminine hands was now all of the immense, untrammelled power of the War Department. Stanton was an opportunist, a cynical, shrewd, incalculable man. It was he who conspired with Chase against Lincoln after Pope's defeat at Bull Run; it was he, rather than Chase, who profited from the uprising of Republican Senators after Burnside's defeat at Fredericksburg. And it was he more than anyone else who profited from Chase's resignation from the Cabinet. Chase would never forgive him for not resigning at the same time. "It is a long time since I ceased to regard Mr. Stanton as reliable for anything except hatred of enemies & offenses to friends," he said. "I gave him unreservedly my faith & affection as a friend and he abandoned me. . . ." ³

"[Stanton] is a born tyrant," observed another Northerner. "He likes to use official power to crush and destroy rebels . . . and anybody else who may happen to stand inconveniently in his way. And I think he likes this use of his power best when it has the 'game flavor' of illegality." Apparently no one discovered that the Secretary had decided on his own authority to suspend the investigation of the Texas Adventure, but President Johnson did learn that Stanton had ignored the recommendations of clemency for Mrs. Surratt by members of the military commission that tried her for complicity in Lincoln's murder. On that day in August, 1867, the President demanded the resignation of his Secretary of War. Stanton, pointing to the Tenure of Office Act, refused. "War to the knife has seldom been declared with such distinctness and such brevity," wrote one observer admiringly when their correspondence appeared in the press. Both Stanton and the President waited to see what Congress would do when it reconvened. ⁴

By the time Kate and Nettie returned to Washington late in 1867, the capital was charged with tension. It was a happy homecoming for

Kate; the fight that was taking shape suited her perfectly. The Radicals, getting ready to crush the President once and for all, were casting around for a leader, and Kate was determined to present them with her father. She was impatient with the issues of the fight — with the question of reconstruction policy and the larger issue of the constitutional division of power in the Federal government. What electrified her was the atmosphere — the open, unrelenting warfare between the two camps — and the prize — the Presidency. Her father would need her now as he never had before.

One prominent New York newspaper brushed aside the signs of Grant's meteoric political rise to warn that Chief Justice Chase, not the general, would be President Johnson's nemesis:⁵

Mr. Chase's residence is the headquarters of the Radical Republicans. The politicians of that party, both black and white, press round the Chief Justice, pay special court to him far more than to any other candidate and evidently regard him as the coming man. His charming daughter, Mrs. Sprague, is the centre of the fashionable female politicians at Washington, who . . . have undoubtedly a great deal of influence. . . . These ladies have made up their slate for the Presidential programme and chances. They are hand in hand with the Southern radical politicians especially, who surround them, and they have calculated to a certainty that the whole of the Southern states will go for Mr. Chase.

Actually, despite all Kate's efforts, her father no longer represented "fully the issue on the radical side," as the editor thought. True, at first he had deplored the moderate policies of Lincoln and Johnson, championed the Radicals' cause on his tour through the South, and in his quasi-private correspondence upheld Congress's reconstruction plan. But by 1868, Chase found that he could no longer follow the Radicals without reservations.

The rift had begun almost immediately after the war when Chase, whose duties as Chief Justice included acting as Circuit Judge of the United States, adamantly refused to hold court in areas under military control. At that time he took great pains to show that he placed the writ of habeas corpus above the cause of a Republican peace. "I do not

believe in military government for American States; nor in military commissions for the trial of American citizens, nor in the subversion of the executive and judicial departments of the general government by Congress, no matter how patriotic the motive may be," he said. Chase's devotion to abstract principle and insistence on the rights of his office had always been agreeable to his friends before, but now his attitude appeared unseemly and devious.

When the Supreme Court in the case of *ex parte Milligan* unani-
mously held that the President had no power to institute trials of
civilians by military tribunal during wartime in areas where civil courts
were functioning, the Radicals protested loudly, seeing a threat to the
existing military government of the South. An Ohioan introduced into
the House a constitutional amendment to abolish the Supreme Court,
and Congress passed a law in an attempt to deprive the court of its
jurisdiction over cases involving the writ of habeas corpus. The
Richmond Enquirer, on the other hand, rejoiced that Chase, the
"high priest of radicalism," had withstood pressure to go along with
his party. "It could not have been foreseen that the Judiciary . . .
would have proved, in the main, so pure and incorruptible, so elevated
above the passions of the hour, and so fearless and efficient in checking
the usurpation of power proceeding from other departments," it said.⁶

While Congress angrily muttered its disapproval of the pretensions
of the Chief Justice, it took direct action to curb forever any similar
antics on the part of the President. The Senate refused to recognize
General Grant as Secretary of War; and, despite all Johnson's efforts
to the contrary, Stanton remained in *de facto* possession of the War
Department. But the quarrel was not settled there. In February, when
the stubborn President once again ordered Stanton out of his Cabinet,
Stanton barricaded himself in his office and waited for Congress to
come to his aid.⁷

The lights in the great sepulchral dome of the Capitol burned late
that stormy night as the Radicals sent up a long shrill cry for Johnson's
head. Impatient to finish off the President once and for all so that it
could go about its business without interference, the House hurriedly
sent a resolution to impeach the President "for high crimes and mis-

demeanors" to Thaddeus Stevens's Committee on Reconstruction; and the committee broke all legislative records by issuing a favorable recommendation in less than twenty-four hours.⁸

In spite of the heavy snowstorm that broke over the city on Sunday night, the entire capital police force was needed to keep order among the crowds that converged on the Capitol for the showdown the next morning. By the time the Speaker rapped his gavel to call the House to order, the marble hallways were spattered with mud and melting snow, and the shadowy House galleries were oppressive with the suffocating moldy odor of wet wool. Reporters, restlessly searching the crowds for names to drop in their next columns, noticed that the incomparable red-haired Kate Chase Sprague was among those in attendance.⁹ Kate was well aware that, should the impeachment vote be carried, her father would be required by the Constitution to preside over the trial. And she also knew that he as well as President Johnson would be on trial before the members of his party.

For seven long hours of debate the excitement was sustained. At last the vote on the impeachment motion was taken: one hundred twenty-six yeas (all Republicans) and forty-seven nays (all Democrats). Thaddeus Stevens was triumphant. "Unfortunate man, thus surrounded, hampered, tangled in the meshes of his own wickedness," he shrieked at the White House, "unfortunate, unhappy man, behold your doom!"¹⁰

That night the curious flocked to the President's White House reception to see how the news had affected him. To their surprise they discovered that he was in excellent spirits. A short man, he stood erect, his dark, deep-set eyes and grim mouth promising a battle. In his day he had weathered many storms, and it was clear that he thought himself far from doomed now.

Hastening on with its arrangements, the House resolved itself into a committee to debate the articles of impeachment, nine revolving around Johnson's dismissal of the Secretary of War and the tenth condemning certain public statements the President had made. The eleventh, conceived by Stevens, was a catchall, accusing the President of obstructing the execution of Radical reconstruction legislation. "If my

article is inserted, what chance has Andrew Johnson to escape?" crowed Stevens. Gideon Welles waved the entire indictment aside as containing a "mountain of words, but not even a mouse of impeachment material."¹¹

Crowds began arriving from all over the country to witness the national spectacle; and Senators, seeing that the show was going to play to a full house, decided to issue tickets to control attendance. Each Senator was allowed four and each Representative two, and in the ensuing scramble for places the public all but forgot President Johnson. Senator Ben Wade complained that within a few days he received four hundred personal requests and thousands more by mail. Congressmen were besieged by bogus reporters claiming to represent the *Bungtown Squasher* or the *Swamppuddle Jupiter*; and poor Senator Anthony of Rhode Island, who had thought of tickets in the first place, found his home surrounded by such crowds that he had to ask for police protection.¹² Kate had no difficulty: her husband's tickets were at her disposal.

Before noon on March 4 it became known that the impeachment managers were ready to place the indictment before the Senate. Immediately the Senate galleries began to fill up, mostly with public-spirited ladies of fashion, who settled themselves in their seats with a great rustle of silk and rubbed their little gloved hands together in an ecstasy of expectation. The quiet drone of government business went on unattended and uninterrupted until suddenly there was a stir, and, like a field of flowers inclining in a gentle wind, the ladies' bonnets turned toward the doors fronting the desk of the presiding officer of the Senate. In came the managers of the impeachment, followed by the Republican members of the House, two by two, like honorary pallbearers. For the most part, the managers were an indifferent-looking lot. The chairman, John A. Bingham, seemed more like a bad-tempered, unkempt poet than a Congressman, and one of his colleagues on the impeachment committee had won the irreverent nickname "The Singed Cat" by his unimposing appearance. But they were among the shrewdest politicians in the House. One of them was Chase's old friend Ben Butler, who once boasted, "You have heard a good many people call me a damned rascal. But did you ever hear any-

body call me a damned fool?" Most impressive was Thaddeus Stevens, who alone among the managers remained seated. Close to death, he sat in an enfeebled silence, his emaciated face paralyzed in a dark scowl, his long bony fingers nervously rubbing the head of his cane. Stevens was the evil genius behind the impeachment—the Cardinal Richelieu of the Radicals. His voice had already faded into a rasping huskiness, but hate would see him through when even the doctors had given him up. Vindictive, stern, and intense was Stevens; the impeachment was his final task, and he meant to stay alive until he saw its completion.¹³

When the Chief Justice was officially notified of the impeachment, he found himself in a precarious political position. If Johnson were to be found guilty, the new President of the United States would automatically be Chase's uncouth political rival from Ohio, Ben Wade, president pro tem of the Senate. Chase had been sorely put upon to administer the oath of office to Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, but there was a question about whether he could endure presiding over the ceremony that would put Wade in the White House. He and Wade had once been Senators together, but they had never been friends. It was Ben Wade who once remarked that Chase thought himself the fourth person in the Trinity. Chase might have forgiven the Senator his witticism, but he could never forget that Wade had challenged him for Ohio's votes in the Republican nominating convention that finally selected the relatively unknown Illinois lawyer Abraham Lincoln. While Wade stolidly affected innocence, Chase, in an excess of grief, told his friends that he would have allowed his arm to be wrenched from his body rather than betray Wade as Wade had betrayed him. The prospect of seeing their old enemy become President infuriated Kate as much as Chase. "The idea of that horrid Ben Wade being put over my father!" she exclaimed to a reporter.¹⁴

On the other hand, if Chase did not see the impeachment to a successful conclusion, what would happen to his own chances for the Presidency? The Radicals were counting on him to play his expected part in the contrived melodrama; and if he failed them now, there would be little possibility of his receiving the party nomination in the

future. His old friends would curse him roundly and nominate some popular hero like General Grant.

Above the din of partisan politics, Chase could not help hearing the disturbing words of the Democrats, who, like clamorous voices of the national conscience, were denouncing the "attempts to degrade and break down one of the great co-ordinate branches of the government, through the spirit of party hatred and vengeance. . . ." One certainty Chase could guarantee—the Chief Justice would lose none of *his* prerogatives in the impeachment proceedings; and he gave notice of his resolution by sending the jurors unsolicited advice on the rules of procedure even before the trial began.¹⁵

Not until the end of March, after the short recess accorded the President's counsel, did the impeachment proceedings get under way in earnest. The key figures of the trial—Stanton and President Johnson—were not present, but Stanton was ably represented by the prosecutors from the House and his friends among the jurors. The President was defended by four of the most brilliant lawyers in the country, including a former Attorney General and a former member of the Supreme Court. If his fate rested on the persuasiveness of his defenders or their knowledge of the law, he seemed assured of acquittal; but his lawyers were to discover that the jury they were facing was different from any they would ever meet again. In that trial was at work something other than the impartial demands of judicial logic. Charles Sumner announced candidly, "This proceeding is political in character—before a political body—and with a political object."¹⁶

A cordon of police surrounded the Capitol, and at every entrance to the Senate chamber was a guard. Despite heavy crowds there was little disorder. The fortunate, after showing their tickets to three different guards, were able to make their way to their seats in a leisurely manner. In the lobby some of the less fortunate were offering as much as twenty dollars for tickets, but most of them came to watch the arrival of the privileged rather than barter for entrance for themselves. Their trouble was well rewarded, for even blasé reporters swore in amazement that not at the height of the season could the Academy of Music draw such a fascinating array of ladies as the Senate proceedings.

Early spring fashions were much in evidence; and, catching the infectious spirit of the times, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* suggested archly, "Why take names second-hand from abroad, when we have a good healthy excitement of domestic growth to organize our shopping nomenclature? Is not Impeachment blue as good as Bismarck brown?" The suggestion captured the fancy of the world of fashion; and in no time impeachment collars, gloves, hats, and bonnets were being displayed in up-to-date shops.¹⁷

The trial soon settled down into a routine. Shortly before one o'clock Chase and Kate would walk to the Capitol together, and Chase would go to Ben Wade's office to put on his judicial robes, while Kate, occasionally accompanied by Garfield, Senator Conkling, or General Grant, would go on to the gallery. From the podium below, Ben Wade would announce a few words in his loud, disagreeable drawl; there would be heard the rustle of Chase's robes as he entered the Senate chamber, then the invocation "Hear ye, hear ye," and the court would be in session. The managers would stride in; the gentle tumult of ladies finding their seats would subside; the journal of the last day's proceedings would be read; and Ben Butler, caressing his bald head nervously, would take up his duties as examining attorney for the managers.¹⁸

Impassively, Chase listened to the arguments, occasionally taking off his glasses and twirling them absent-mindedly. He was a study in black and white, an aloof, heroic figure presiding on the high dais, his impersonal judicial robes intensifying the pallor of his face and the streaks of white in his newly grown beard. His air of imperturbable dignity disguised his discomfort as he settled himself in Wade's chair each day and looked out over the Senate. Below him sat the jurors, many of them his old friends: Fessenden, a thin, slight figure, his sparse gray hair and side whiskers making him look like an over-worked bank clerk; Senator Sumner, the headmaster of the Senate, a man wedded to principles ("His sympathies were for race — too lofty to descend to persons," someone had once said of him); John Sherman, with his cold, clear-cut profile. Beyond sat Roscoe Conkling, the dazzling Senator from New York who had done his apprenticeship in the House under Thaddeus Stevens before graduating to the upper house

—Roscoe Conkling, the matinee idol of the Senate, gallantly playing his role for the fawning ladies in the galleries. Nearby was Chase's son-in-law William Sprague, slouched apathetically in his chair. But, despite his close associations with the Senators, Chase got the unmistakable impression that not all of them looked forward to his daily appearance. "My position is peculiarly difficult," he confided to a friend. "As the Chief Justice, my whole duties, except in the single case of impeachment, connect me with another body. Coming into the Senate to preside, I feel and am felt as a sort of foreign element. The Senate, like all other bodies, has a good deal of *esprit de corps*." ¹⁹

The egotism of that select fraternity was part of Chase's difficulty with the Senate. Henry Adams, who, unlike Chase, had never been a Senator, thought the legislators passed belief. "The comic side of their egotism partly disguised its extravagance . . . but their egotism and factiousness were no laughing matter. They did permanent and terrible mischief," he said. The enormous self-esteem of the Senators was not, however, the main obstacle to their welcoming Chase joyfully to their midst. Even before the impeachment they had developed considerable antagonism toward the Chief Justice, who symbolized the Federal judiciary — the most dangerous threat besides Johnson to their program. Then just before the trial began, he enraged them by inviting President Johnson and his daughters to a reception at his home. Unpleasant stories about Chase had gained circulation. "According to 'kitchen gossip' from the capital, Chase, C.J., and A. Johnson are in alliance on this impeachment question, wishing to defeat . . . their common enemy, Grant," wrote one knowledgeable Northerner in his diary. ²⁰

Immediately after the court convened, Chase's stubborn insistence on the rights of his office sparked an explosion that almost blew up the proceedings. Senator Sumner insisted that the Chief Justice was to be limited to keeping order, and Senator Conkling gave a melodious defense of this view; but Chase, pursuing his determination to do his duty in spite of his friends, was unmoved. He warned ominously that there would be no use in his remaining in his seat if the Senate decreed that he was merely to maintain order. Reminding themselves that the

Constitution required the presence of the Chief Justice to make the impeachment legal, the Senators reluctantly agreed to let Chase have his way about the rules of procedure.²¹

The Radicals made a fight about the matter for one reason: they were suspicious that Chase was no longer to be trusted with their cause. He had shown an infuriating lack of zeal in the trial of Jefferson Davis, who, contrary to Lincoln's wishes, had been arrested for treason shortly after the war. The Radicals had hammered away for a quick conviction; and that loyal patriot William Sprague, anxious for the swift punishment of treason, had urged Chase to recommend trying Davis in a military court to avoid any possibility of acquittal by civil authorities. Opposed to military law, Chase had refused to be hurried; and the Radicals found to their disgust that the civil trial of Davis had to be postponed so that Chase could give his full attention to the impeachment proceedings. The Radicals, however, were willing to concentrate their attention on doing away with Andrew Johnson, even if the hanging of Davis had to be put off. Johnson was more trouble in the White House than Jefferson Davis was in prison.²²

The Radicals were not embarrassed to find themselves demanding that Chase find Davis guilty for "insisting that the Southern states were out of the Union while Andrew Johnson was being tried for insisting they were in." Long ago their fanaticism had opened cracks in their respect for the slow-moving machinery of the law, and by 1868 the country was faced with the curious spectacle of lawmakers contemptuous of the law.²³

The Radicals rightly suspected that Chase was not in sympathy with the impeachment. During the trial the Chief Justice confided in a friend, "To me the whole business seems wrong, and if I had any opinion, under the Constitution, I would not take part in it. . . . How can the President fulfill his oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution, if he has no *right to defend* it against an act of Congress, sincerely believed by him to have been passed in violation of it?

"To me, therefore," he concluded, "it seems perfectly clear that the President had a perfect right, and, indeed, was under the highest obligation, to remove Mr. Stanton, if he made the removal . . . with a

sincere belief that the tenure of office act was unconstitutional, and for the purpose of bringing the question before the Supreme Court." ²⁴

Chase was aware of the cost to his own political future of opposing his friends' supreme effort to take over the government; but, apparently, after years of sacrificing honor to his ambition, he had found that the principles of law meant more to him than the Presidency. Determined to keep the trial from degenerating into a mockery of justice, Salmon P. Chase seemed the one lonely exception to Henry Adams's lament that "the moral law had expired — like the Constitution." ²⁵ Historians would mark his courageous independence during the impeachment trial as the most respectable and admirable action of his entire career.

When Chase revealed his sentiments, Sumner and his other old friends in the Senate and House flew into a rage. They had pushed and pulled to get his financial legislation through Congress during the war, fought a hard rear-guard action against his enemy General McClellan, and, under Chase's influence, almost succeeded in forcing Lincoln to remove Seward from the Cabinet. They had done their best to save their friend from embarrassing investigations of the Treasury Department, given his campaign literature circulation at public expense, and converged on Lincoln almost en masse to insist that he be named Chief Justice. Now, after all their services, he was betraying them when they needed him most.

They turned on him angrily. Ben Butler went out of his way to insult Chase, and the Radical press read him out of the Republican Party, saying that he was wooing the Democrats to get the presidential nomination of that party. Chase denied any such shocking motives for his conduct. "The subject of the Presidency has become distasteful to me," he said. "Some will say 'sour grapes'; and there may be some ground for the application of the proverb. But I really think I am not half so ambitious of place as I am represented to be." ²⁶

Chase's ambition may have been lagging, but Kate's was not. She alone had opposed the nomination of her father to the Supreme Court; and after more than three years her rebellion against his retirement from politics once again burst into view. In that intervening time, while

apparently absorbed in her family life, social activities, and travel, Kate had not been oblivious of the turbulent political struggle in the capital. Impatient as she was, she had known that she would have to wait until the time was right, and she had watched the kaleidoscope in Washington with her shrewd practiced eyes, while planning her mansion in Rhode Island and traveling about Europe. Finally, less than a year before the presidential nominating conventions were to meet, she had returned to take her place at her father's side.²⁷

Mystery surrounded Kate's part in the ceremony slowly playing itself out on the floor of the Senate. She was the center of attention and speculation when she entered the galleries, took her reserved seat, smoothened her skirts, and leaned forward to watch the proceedings below. Society reporters were rapturous. Mrs. Sprague was a "picture of delicacy and grace, arrayed in silk tinted with the shade of a dead forest leaf, with dead gold ornaments to match," they reported. "Paris has Eugénie; Washington has Mrs. Senator Sprague, the acknowledged queen of fashion and good taste."²⁸ Mesmerized by the astonishing perfection of her beauty, reporters made Kate one of the most talked-about women in the country. She became a principal in the trial of Andrew Johnson by nothing more than sheer loveliness; and yet those who knew Kate best were convinced that her part in the drama was more than decorative. Never before had she remained passive when her father's interests were at stake.

Week after week the trial dragged on; and after endless days of angry controversy some of the high excitement faded from Washington. The lobbies of the Capitol continued to be crowded; but often, unless an important witness or speaker was scheduled, the galleries were half empty.²⁹ But Kate's interest never flagged. Day after day she took her seat shortly after one o'clock and attentively, with a marble composure, watched the scene below — watched the chief prosecutor Ben Butler, her father, and the Senators — her childhood idol Charles Sumner, the handsome Roscoe Conkling, and her husband.

Of all the actors in the Radicals' extravaganza, probably the man who enjoyed his part the least was Senator William Sprague. Chase had thought his own position peculiar, but what of that of his son-in-law?

Throughout the spectacle Sprague was slumped abjectly at his Senate desk, occasionally coming to life briefly to move for adjournment, but taking no part in debate. He appeared to be a passive observer, confused by the controversy and a little bored; and, until the time for the final vote approached, he was almost entirely overlooked. Sprague was glad to be left alone. He needed time, time to think out a solution to his perilous situation. The key figures of his past and future were involved in the impeachment; and by some strange quirk of fate Sprague found that he was on trial along with Andrew Johnson, not publicly, of course, but just as certainly as if he had been named in each of the eleven articles of impeachment. On the high dais of the Senate was his father-in-law, doing his utmost to save a scrap of national dignity from the Radical lions in Congress. Looking up toward the galleries, Sprague could see Kate—Kate, his beautiful, scheming wife. There was no doubt in his mind that she would insist he support her father's conclusions regarding the trial, and he knew that any resistance on his part would snap the last thread of her patience with him. He may have speculated idly on what she was thinking as she watched the trial. What were her impressions of the red-haired baritone from New York—Roscoe Conkling?

Bringing his attention back to the Senate floor after those occasional reveries, Sprague would find himself eye to eye with Benjamin F. Butler, Old Cockeye—once the Beast of New Orleans, now the chief prosecutor in the impeachment trial. Sprague had occasion to wonder how much Butler knew of his blockade-running activities during the war. If Harris Hoyt had ever used Sprague's letter to Butler, intended to give that agent's cotton dealings a specious quasi legality, Sprague was certain of one thing: Butler would not have forgotten the incident.

Sprague may have had doubts about the extent of the knowledge of Butler, Chase, and Kate, but there was not the slightest doubt in his mind about that of one person—Edwin M. Stanton. Hoyt had saved his own skin by making a confidential statement during his court-martial with regard to Sprague's complicity in the Texas Adventure, and that statement had been duly sent to the Secretary of War, along

with all the other evidence necessary for the indictment of the principals for treason. Sprague did not have to be reminded of his private debt to Stanton for quietly dropping the prosecution of the Texas Adventurers. Now he had a remarkable opportunity to repay the kindness. By finding Stanton's enemy Andrew Johnson guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors, perhaps Senator William Sprague would be able to escape being found guilty of treason.

Summations began in April and continued into May, and the fears and suspicions of both sides rose sharply as the trial drew to a close. At first, gambling odds had favored conviction. Thirty-one Senators were openly committed to vote against Johnson, and only five more votes from any of the eleven remaining Republicans were necessary to make the decisive two-thirds majority. "The removal of the obstruction is certain," Ben Butler cheerfully predicted. "Wade and prosperity are sure to come with the apple blossoms." Butler was, as Lincoln had once remarked, "as full of poisoned gas as a dead dog," and doubts about his judgment began to disturb the Radicals as weeks passed without a clear indication as to which way the vote would go.³⁰

Spiritualists, then much in vogue, called upon the dead to enlighten the living on the outcome; but in the babel of answering voices there was no certainty. Churches held special prayer meetings asking God and the Senators for conviction. Telling his congregation, "We know de Lord is just and dat de place of torment in torture is preserved all de same for de Senator and sinner," the Reverend Sampson Jones prayed that "de Lord would stiffen wid de grace of fortitude de doubtful backbone of de waverly Senators, and dat Andrew Johnson, de demented Moses of Tennessee, would be disremoved by de sanctimonious voice ob de Senate to whar de wicked cease from troublin' and de weary am at rest."³¹

Prayer did not settle the doubts of the frantic Radicals in Congress. As betting odds gradually changed to favor the President, the leaders of the impeachment were thrown into a frenzy. Logic had flown, and in its place sat intrigue and power. Conspiratorial groups met late at night to assess this man's vote or that man's influence. Private detec-

tives watched Chase's home to see if undecided Senators called on him for advice. Behind the scenes tremendous pressures were put on the doubtful Senators; and each day, as they arrived in the Senate lobby, they were besieged by reporters and often by scented ladies who had come to plead their view of the case.³²

Benjamin F. Butler darted busily from one group to another plotting his triumph. "Tell the damn scoundrel that if he wants money, there is a bushel of it to be had," he growled about one doubtful Senator.³³ One afternoon, on Fifteenth Street, Secretary Welles met Butler conversing earnestly with one of the jurors, that "conceited coxcomb" Roscoe Conkling. They were unsettled to meet Welles; it was obvious they wished they had not.

Welles was aware of the shameless bargaining that was being practiced by the jury and the prosecutors. Counting the few Senators who appeared to be holding out against the pressure, he wrote sadly in his diary, "These are frail staffs to lean upon, yet they are taken in the absence of better." Sprague was still one of the doubtful Senators, but the President hoped for his support. "Sprague is counted on for acquittal through Mrs. Sprague and her father," Welles declared confidently. But a few days later he was not so sure. "Is . . . Sprague certain for acquittal?" he asked himself.³⁴

Up until then Sprague had made only one cryptic statement to a caucus of moderate Republicans, that he would vote "not guilty" if his vote were needed, but that he did not wish to "sacrifice his political future unnecessarily."³⁵ The Senators friendly to the President had to be satisfied with Sprague's ambiguous — and masterfully understated — reservations about supporting Johnson; but Kate, knowing that her father would be politically ruined by the passage of the impeachment, did not feel compelled to accept her husband's evasions. In his frantic efforts not to seem ungracious toward Mr. Stanton, Sprague ran head on into a savage quarrel with her. After a violent scene she packed her trunks and left for Narragansett. Already burdened with the vexing problems of the trial and the increasingly venomous attacks from his Radical Republican friends, Chase suddenly found that the divisive forces of politics were destroying his own home. Taking up his trou-

bled role as peacemaker, he wrote Kate, urging her to take her place beside her husband in Washington.

"Most of all I long to see you as a content Christian woman — not only religious but happy in religion," he told her. "I realize painfully how far short I am of my own ideal; but I am not the less desirous that you should succeed where I fail. . . .

"How I do love you my darling! My whole heart yearns to go toward you while I write and tears come to my eyes. How wrong it is for those who love not to express their love. I remember how often you have felt hurt by my apparent indifference to what interested you; and . . . I see now in your husband something of that which I blame in myself. But I know how strong my love really was, and I know his is. And I am very glad that, while you have sometimes forgotten that the happiness of a wife is most certainly secured by loving submission and by loving tact, you, generally, conquer by sweetness. I never saw him so much affected as by the difference that occurred between you just before you went away. He was almost unmanned — near to tears. . . . You must *love away all his reserve* — and help yourself to do so by reflecting how generous, self-sacrificing & indulgent a husband he has been to you. How few husbands could consent to such strains; & be at once so liberal & thoughtful. If he were only a true Christian, he would be really perfect." ³⁶

It was true that Kate had usually been able to conquer by sweetness, but neither sweet Kate nor good Kate could control Sprague now, and she raged to find that he would not obey her wishes. When he was agreeable, he irritated her; when he was stubborn, she hated him. The *Philadelphia Star* reported that Kate threatened to leave her husband if he voted "guilty." ³⁷

Rumors spread that the Chief Justice too was seeking to influence Sprague and other key Senators for acquittal. The *New York World* was uncertain about his success in the case of his son-in-law. ". . . Mr. Sprague, although the youngest member of the Senate, is a man of more independence of character and judgment than he is usually credited for. He is certainly no thrall of the Chief Justice, and is enabled by his immense wealth and superior position in his own state of Rhode

Island to be his own master in every respect." ³⁸ Sprague was hardly his own master, but he was determined not to serve as his own executioner.

Chase denied that he was giving parties to sway uncommitted Senators or that he was trying to dominate Sprague. "More lies seem to be afloat about me than I thought invention capable of," he told Horace Greeley. "Sprague was not influenced by me, nor did I seek to influence him. . . . The stories are mere bosh . . . except that there is a grain of fact sunk in gallons of falsehood." ³⁹

Excitement mounted as the Senate went into secret session for its final deliberations. Still Sprague remained noncommittal, but not long before the final vote was scheduled to begin, three Republican Senators broke their silence and joined their colleague Senator Grimes in speaking out for the President. The impeachment managers looked glum; the House emptied in panic at the astonishing news. When the long debate was interrupted by dinner, one of the Senators claimed by both sides was seen getting into Sprague's carriage with Sprague and the Chief Justice. "We are sold out!" cried Butler. ⁴⁰

A few of the impeachment managers were ready to throw in the sponge and admit defeat, but some of the President's friends thought the issue still in doubt. Senator Grimes told the press gloomily that in his opinion the issue rested with the Senators from Rhode Island and Willey, one of the Senators from West Virginia. If those three were to vote for impeachment, the President would be convicted, he said. "We have truly fallen upon evil times," said the Chief Justice. To Kate, still refusing to return to her husband, Chase wrote: "My own judgment & feeling favors acquittal, but I have no vote & do not know how the Senators will vote. It seems to me that there is very little balance of probability either way. . . ." ⁴¹

Rumors disturbed the tensely waiting city. It was said that there was an attempt on foot to poison various key jurors, and newspapers warned against drinking out of any of the water pitchers in the Capitol Building when several Senators became indisposed because of mysterious intestinal disorders. "The seat of the attack was in the bowels," warned the *Philadelphia Star*. When Senator Grimes suffered a mild

attack of paralysis, Welles observed feelingly, "... he has for some weeks undergone great mental excitement in consequence of the estrangement of old associates, and malignant assaults from his political friends. . . ." ⁴²

Unfortunately for Sprague, no maladies struck him down. He was not to be spared; he would have to register his decision.

On the morning of May 16, thousands of visitors hurried to the Capitol to witness the climax of the spectacle. It was a cloudless spring day, and along Pennsylvania Avenue near the Capitol grounds the crowds, carrying their picnic baskets under their arms, could hear the splashing fountains and the droning of lawn mowers. The majority munched their sandwiches, gawked at the huge paintings in the rotunda, or made book on the outcome. With great difficulty police were able to keep a narrow corridor open in the Senate halls so that those who had tickets could edge their way to the galleries, which began to fill up before eleven o'clock. There was "a restive fluttering of crystal and gold bedecked fans, a slight sprinkling of beauty and a preponderance of funereal faces. . . . At other times the ladies might prefer admiring each other's bonnets but on this occasion even the unreflecting butterflies of fashion leaned inquiringly forward and watched the solemn procedure. . . ." ⁴³ No one seemed to take any notice of the absence of Kate Chase Sprague.

Senators Sprague and Anthony were engaged in an animated conversation when the Chief Justice entered and slowly walked to his chair. It was immediately moved that the vote be taken on the eleventh article of impeachment, which was thought to have the best chance of passage. The Senate agreed, and the voting began. Chase's voice faltered and his hand trembled as he read the question he was to put to each Senator in alphabetical order: "Mr. Senator Anthony, how say you? Is the respondent Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, guilty or not guilty of a high misdemeanor as charged in this article?" Senator Anthony arose, flushed self-consciously, said a curt "Guilty," bowed foolishly, and sat down. A confused murmur blew through the chamber. When Chase came to Grimes, he suggested that the Senator might prefer to remain seated; but Senator Grimes raised

himself from his chair and unfalteringly pronounced, "Not guilty." The voting was close; the Radicals had almost made certain of their two-thirds majority when Chase at last looked down at his son-in-law. "Mr. Senator Sprague, how say you? Is the respondent Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, guilty or not guilty of a high misdemeanor as charged in this article?" Sprague rose to his feet, paused, and said, "Guilty." ⁴⁴

CHAPTER III

The Bright Jewel

THE HIGH drama ended. Ben Wade, the last Senator to register his vote, said, "Guilty"; there was a brief silence in the chamber; then the Chief Justice announced the results: nineteen Senators for acquittal, thirty-five for conviction, one vote short of the two thirds necessary to carry the impeachment.¹ Knowing that the failure of the eleventh article meant their defeat, the Radicals gave a cry of rage and crept away to spin insubstantial webs of vengeance for those they blamed for their failure.

William Sprague sat dully in his Senate seat amidst his bleating colleagues. If his tired face betrayed any expression, it was probably a faint smile of elation. He had voted with the losers; but no matter what the outcome of the trial, he had triumphed. Having paid his debt to Edwin M. Stanton, the Senator had won a reprieve. Sprague may also have been gratified to discover that Kate, despite her threats, was making no immediate plans to leave him. With the outcome of the impeachment a victory for her father, she was too preoccupied with politics to quarrel further with her husband.

To simple-minded men it appeared that neither Kate nor Chase could have any further concern with politics. While presiding over the Senate, Chase had declared, "I worked for ideas and principles . . . and was always quite willing to take place, or be left out of place. . . ." ² This folly, his devotion to principles, had brought him excommunication from his party and hard words from his friends; and it seemed that he would have to sit out the rest of his days on the political side lines in judicial black, the garb of his incorruptible office, but for Chase the weeds of mourning for ambitions buried. If his conduct during the trial was to be attributed more to his jealousy of Stanton than his de-

votion to the Constitution, the Radicals cared not. They did not admire Chase's insistence on the niceties of procedure, nor did they sympathize with his feelings about Stanton. Chase was a renegade, and they were done with him.³

If Chase had been satisfied with his position on the Supreme Court, the ill nature of his friends would have been no hardship. Ignoring their spiteful words, he could have congratulated himself smugly on finding himself at the top of the legal profession, no small attainment for a man who had been admitted to the bar more out of charity than for merit. He could have further comforted himself with the thought that he would stay on in Washington while capricious electoral winds blew his Radical friends in and out of the capital. But, earnestly as Chase would count his many blessings, he found that he was not happy. He was bored by the court liturgy, the solemn funereal entrance of the judges, the ceremonial bows of bar and court, the "oyez" of the marshal, and the endless spinning of arguments. Not having practiced law for twenty years, he had to work harder than his learned colleagues, and the prolonged hours of isolated scholarship soon became a heavy burden. It was not that Chase disliked hard work; he had relished it when it meant conferences with financiers, generals, and political agents, and a voluminous correspondence about his presidential chances. But the work of the bench required him to sit immured in black listening to the rise and fall of a thin voice pleading a cause that was not his own, or, worse still, to retire to his office, close the door, and in solitude open up his law books. Chase liked travel, change, and excitement, and he liked people more than his cold, reserved manner disclosed. Most of all he missed the hounds of ambition and struggle. As Chief Justice he had no favors to grant, no patronage to wield, and, supposedly, no personal ambitions. Carl Schurz wrote his wife that Chase was like a "wounded lion" in his new position.⁴

Not long after his appointment, the Chief Justice was wistfully confiding to Jay Cooke, "I think I have a good deal of executive faculty and often wish I were in some more active employment than hearing causes which take up my whole time." During the summer of 1867, when the fight between President Johnson and the Radicals was reach-

ing a climax, he wrote Nettie: "And it does look now that, if there were no military names before the public, the choice of the people might fall upon me. But very many seem to think that the nomination of a military candidate is a predestined event. . . . So," he concluded forlornly, "I make myself contented, or try to. It seems to me that I could accomplish, if I had the power, much that would be beneficial to the country, and I am not insensible to the distinction of the Chief Magistracy. But if the people don't want my services, I have no right to complain. . . . No man has any claim to such distinctions in a country like ours." ⁵

Chase's philosophy was cold comfort. Feeling in his heart that he and the country deserved his election, he wrote Jay Cooke greedily, "What folly men are talking about greenbacks, national currency, etc. It ought to be corrected. I wish I could put off the gown and say my say. But I must hold my tongue at present. Possibly the people may take the gown off next year. It looks so, our friends say, more and more. What do you think?" ⁶

Chase's tenacity in holding on to his vision of the Presidency was founded on the solid rock of his self-esteem. "You are . . . wrong in holding me responsible, *in any bad sense*, for my enemies," he told a carping newspaperman. "I am sure, I do not 'create' them, by wrongdoing. Some of them make themselves such by mistakes and misconception — some are enemies because they hate what I think best — and some from envy and spite. How am I responsible for these?" When a cousin informed him that his uncle, old Bishop Philander Chase, had had a poor opinion of him, Chase replied complacently, "I am sorry to learn from your account that the old bishop had so bad an opinion of me. I hope he has thought better of the matter since, for he was a good man, and is, I believe, in heaven." ⁷ At least in heaven Chase was confident of receiving his just deserts, but in the imperfect temporal sphere he could not be sure.

Chase did his best to see that the Lord's will was done on earth. Shortly after his elevation to the Supreme Court bench, he began to re-assemble all the pieces of his last campaign for the presidential nomination. In place of the various campaign biographies of 1864 was *A*

Southern Tour, the catalogue of cheers for Chase written by a journalist friend who had acted as his faithful Boswell on the trip. Jay Cooke was expected to organize the sentiments of the press,⁸ and Sprague, of course, was counted on for his share of cash. In 1868, Chase would have to do without the powerful cabal built with Treasury patronage, but he knew he could depend on many former employees whose loyalty had outlived his sojourn in the Cabinet. As President he would have sufficient patronage to reward their faithfulness handsomely.

But once again, as in 1860 and 1864, across Chase's path fell a shadow, this time a short, stocky image in the place of Lincoln's long one. Jealously Chase watched the growing popularity of General Grant. To his dismay he saw his good works in the Treasury Department fade into insignificance before the brilliance of Grant's triumph at Appomattox. Chase had given the nation a troublesome national debt, but the general had given it victory. The Chief Justice was not entirely candid in telling friends that the impeachment proceedings forced him to give up all thoughts of the Presidency for fear of being influenced in his judicial decisions. By January, 1868, weeks before President Johnson's trial began, Grant, not the impeachment, had made him relinquish any hopes for the Republican nomination.⁹

Chase's supererogatory devotion to principle during the trial may have seemed like ill-advised retaliation against his party; but actually he was contriving, as he had many times before, to make capital out of calamity. His idealism had seemed suicidal for an ambitious young man in the fifties, when the cause of the Negro was championed largely by cranks and dreamers, but his pitying friends had seen him become one of the most powerful men in the country for his zeal. Time may have tarnished some of Chase's principles, but it had dimmed none of his shrewdness. He was not unaware that his conduct during Johnson's trial was observed by powers other than the Republicans.

As the Chief Justice, apparently insensible to the feelings of his former friends, cautiously picked his way through the thorny legalities of the impeachment, the Radicals shrieked that he had gone over to the Democrats. Some thoughtful editors blamed Kate's ambition, not her father's, for his strange behavior. The *New York Herald* commented:

"... we are told that [Chase's] accomplished daughter ... is, and for some time has been, not only foolishly ambitious to be recognized officially as first lady in the land, but that to gain this end she has been and is playing the game of a remorseless politician ... that, being a lady of spirit and decision of character, who will not take no for an answer, she has led her father, the Chief Justice, into this unseemly pursuit of the Presidential succession; and finally, that in view of the defeat of her aspirations in this [Republican] direction, there is no telling the consequences in the Senate upon this impeachment business."¹⁰

Kate was silent, but Chase loudly and indignantly denied that he was flirting with the Democrats. At the same time he was privately writing a Democratic politician that, if the Democratic Party accepted his principles, he would "not be at liberty to refuse the use of my name."¹¹ Was Chase, after all, the lone exception to Henry Adams's dispirited conclusion that "the moral law had expired"? Perhaps, if he had been content to let the Democrats come to him out of gratitude when the trial was over, it would be easier to answer yes; but he went to them while the issue was still in balance. As he sat on the podium in the Senate chamber, the Chief Justice was indeed a study in black and white—a man sincerely devoted to the maintenance of national dignity and respect for the Constitution, jealous of his own prerogatives, resentful of Stanton, Wade, and all the Radical ingrates, actively canvassing for the Democratic nomination.

As expected, the Republicans nominated General Grant late in May at their convention in Chicago. Democrats continued to discuss Chase, and to that heady talk the Chief Justice responded with his familiar ceremony of diffidence, in public declaring that he was not available for public office, in private declaring just as solemnly that should the nomination take place "under circumstances which would make it my duty to accept," he would.

As the Chase movement boomed, letters of stunned disbelief poured in on the Chief Justice from his friends throughout the country. Their amazement that a former Radical Republican could consider himself a likely Democratic nominee was more justified than their surprise at the rumors that he would accept should the nomination be offered. His

courtship of political parties had always been whirlwind and fickle: he had flirted with the National Republicans, Whigs, Liberty Party, Free-Soilers, and Democrats before settling for the Republican Party. Looking at Chase's erratic record, one Ohio governor said wryly, "It is probably safe to say that he had membership in more political parties . . . with less mutual obligation arising therefrom, than any other public man America has produced. . . . He had belonged to all, had repudiated all, and had been repudiated by all."

Throughout his checkered party career Chase always insisted that he was consistent in principle, but one of his political associates who preferred to judge consistency by its formal aspects warned, "Avoid him. He is a political vampire. No! He's a sort of moral bull-bitch."¹²

Chase's dalliance with the Democrats had never been very satisfactory. When he first arrived in the Senate, talking like a Free-Soiler but calling himself a Democrat, his colleagues, suspicious of a man whose political attachments came and went like the seasons, refused to put him on any committees. At the time, Chase had been furious, but in 1868 he found himself fondly recalling his unrequited affection. The only quarrel that he had ever had with the Democratic Party was about slavery, he said; and, with that matter now settled, he was ready for a reconciliation.¹³

Many people questioned whether Chase would have any better luck with the party in 1868 than he had had before. The Democrats might encourage him during the trial and then ignore him afterward, they suspected. Some Democrats were, it was true, gloating in private: "Chase is out of the question. . . . We will use him well, but must not think of nominating him."¹⁴ But, while men like the Blairs railed and sputtered at seeing Chase follow them into the Democratic Party, clear-headed politicians knew that Chase and the Democrats were drawn together by mutual self-interest which transcended the impeachment question. Chase, as usual, needed a nomination. With the Radical Republicans waving the bloody shirt and calling them the party of treason, the Democrats needed a candidate who would symbolize the good faith of the South in accepting defeat and the good will of the North in accepting victory, one who would attract both Southerners and moder-

ate Northerners. The Chief Justice seemed to be the only man strong enough to beat the unbeatable General Grant.

Chase regretfully left Jay Cooke behind when he changed camps. The banker shrewdly crept into open country between the two potential Republican candidates until the contest tipped one way or another; but by December, 1867, seeing that Chase had already passed his peak of power, he felt secure in declaring himself for Grant.¹⁵ Taking the switch in their stride, some of Chase's other friends, under the guidance of William Sprague's brother Amasa, formed a Committee of One Hundred to plead Chase's case before the convention. However, there were few delegates pledged to support him when the Democratic convention convened in New York City early in July. Even the Ohio delegation seemed to hang back. Chase's sad prophecy seemed likely to be true: ". . . my private judgment is that talk about me will come to nothing. The Democracy is not Democratic enough."

His supporters made up in activity for whatever their candidate lacked in optimism. Upon arriving in New York, F. A. Aiken, secretary of the Committee of One Hundred, boasted to Chase, "Since nine this morning I have not allowed the grass to grow under my feet. . . ." But his busyness had yielded news that was not altogether bright, and the point of his letter was a request for three hundred dollars to establish a headquarters where he could hang a Chase sign and offer Chase hospitality to friends and strangers arriving in the city. Chase did not reply immediately, hoping that Aiken's industry would turn up a substitute for Jay Cooke to offset the surprising lack of financial help from his son-in-law William Sprague. Aiken was forced to press his request again. Chase could not let his paltry income prevent him from being a contender at the convention after all he had already sacrificed for that purpose, and so he sent the money.¹⁶

Besides the Committee of One Hundred, distinguished chiefly by its round numbers, Chase had other lieutenants in New York—his private secretary, J. W. Schuckers; an Ohio Copperhead, Alexander Long; an old friend, James C. Kennedy; and Hiram Barney and John Cisco, former Treasury employees. A score of Negroes were buttonholing delegates with the argument that Chase could command more Southern

Negro votes than any other candidate. In the inner circle was a New York Democrat, John D. Van Buren. Before the convention he had commented to a friend, "I don't know what to make of the Chase matter. It seems pretty clear we shall have no difficulty in carrying our troops over to him, the rank and file are overanxious to run that way, so much so that they will suffer a disappointment." What had he meant by *suffer a disappointment*? Was there, after all, some truth in the rumor that Chase was being used by the party? Chase himself had no doubts about Van Buren's loyalty. "I think he & Mr. Cisco are my best & most . . . reliable friends there," he told Kate. To Van Buren he wrote: "My confidence in your friendship and judgment combined is very great, and I wish that everything could be either through you or under your supervision."

Missing from New York at that time was Senator William Sprague. He was not conspicuous by his absence; for the Senate, hot, bad-tempered, and weary after its long, exhilarating months in the limelight, had been forced to remain on in the capital during the intemperate heat of summer to take care of its tedious business of legislation. Sprague, perhaps anxious to quit the house at Sixth and E streets after his vote against Chase's interests in the impeachment, apparently did not remain in Washington to take his usual insignificant part in Senate proceedings. He may have gone South to look over his recently acquired plantations, or he may have been vacationing in Rhode Island. No one, not even Kate or Chase, thought his whereabouts noteworthy.¹⁷

Chase could do without his son-in-law at the convention, for Kate was there serving as his campaign manager. "Unless nominated now it is my fixed intention to have nothing more to do with political life," her father warned her, and so she came to New York from Narragansett to see that he would be.¹⁸ "But never mind," she had said when Lincoln put her father on the bench, "but never mind, I will defeat you all!"

Up until convention time Kate for the most part had officially stayed in the background, giving private parties and private advice; and, on the rare occasions when she was publicly linked with political intrigue, her father had been very displeased. "[Katie's] own good sense teaches her, and it is my earnest wish, that she should keep entirely aloof from

everything connected with politics. . . ." ¹⁹ he had said. But after two convention failures Chase was persuaded to relent. From the high dais of the Supreme Court he watched Kate take command when she returned from her second trip to Europe, at first wooing the Republicans, but, upon seeing her mistake, turning to the Democrats. And, barred by his position from openly managing his affairs in New York, he allowed her to take his place.

Being a woman, Kate was not permitted on the steamy floor of Tammany Hall, but she found much to be done in the private caucuses and secret conferences where the real business of the convention took place. Kate was content with her opportunities, limited as they were. She had little sympathy for the grim heralds of the woman-suffrage movement like Susan B. Anthony, whose address to the delegates was heard with raucous male laughter. ²⁰ Kate wanted much more than the franchise; and, being a realist, she did not dissipate her influence by taking up odd causes. She was, she knew, the most powerful woman in the United States; and if she succeeded in this, her great effort, her rewards would be public. She would become the First Lady of the land.

The center of intrigue, surrounded by young politicians, she reveled in her new role. Flushed with excitement, she wrote her father from her headquarters at the Fifth Avenue Hotel two days before the convention was to begin: "Amasa [Sprague, her brother-in-law] is here working with all his might. The young men are the life of this movement. Things look a good deal clearer, and A[masa] insists that *he* will know tonight which way the cat will jump. . . ." She did not add that she had immediately run into trouble. In their haste to bring the South back into the party as well as into the Union, the Democrats had invited to the convention several secessionists and ex-Confederate generals, including Wade Hampton and Nathan Forrest, Southerners who were not happy at the prospect of Chase's becoming the party nominee. One of them remarked to Hampton, "Judge Chase's daughter is here electioneering for the nomination of her father but [I] would not see her, for Southern delegates said if Chase were nominated the party would cease to be the Democratic Party." ²¹

Knowing that the outcome was much in doubt, Kate told her father

comfortingly, "I am glad you are not going to be greatly disappointed if the nomination is not for you. I would like to see this bright jewel added to your *brow* of earthly distinctions & *I believe* it *will* be but we can live & be happy & just as proud of you without it. Will the country do as well?"²²

Contrary to what she wrote Chase, Kate was having anything but perfect rest and quiet in New York. The confusion and noise along with the bad weather ("as hot as weather can be. Too hot for the work on hand here," according to Kate) were disconcerting even to the most dedicated Democrats. To Republicans the combination was maddening. One with tender sensibilities commented, "The delegates are a rough lot—thirsty, porky creatures, in linen 'dusters,' with badges in their buttonholes. They sally forth from the . . . hotels in squads of a dozen, and invade the already occupied omnibus. . . . 'I reckon we'd better stop at the New York Hotel and licker up'—and so on." Republican newspapers in the city affected surprise at the peculiar affinity between whiskey and conventions, that is, Democratic conventions. Like the alliance between firecrackers and patriotism, the *Herald* declared, this relationship was not clearly understood by the ordinary rules governing life. Nonetheless, in hotel lobbies, corridors, and bars were great crowds of people drinking bourbon and sours and talking about the nomination.²³ Everywhere there was evident an excitement that had eluded the Republican convention at Chicago. Unlike its predecessor, the Democratic convention met without an undisputed favorite; and even by the opening meeting on Saturday, the Fourth of July, the Tammany cat had still to jump.

By the time the gavel fell, Chase's campaign was well under way. At first, when badgered to prove his sincerity by binding himself irrevocably to the Democratic Party, he had hesitated nervously.²⁴ It did seem prudent that a general should announce himself when he went over to the enemy rather than risk being shot by his uninformed new allies. On the other hand, the main reason for his astounding conversion was his hope for the nomination; and if the ungrateful Democrats passed him over for a notorious Copperhead, he would want to march on through their camp to a lofty plateau of neutrality. By committing himself be-

forehand, he offered the Democrats what influence he had in Republican ranks without insuring himself of a *quid pro quo*. If the Democrats' overtures to him were devious, he would be playing into their hands. Chase may not have thought of that last possibility; he instinctively trusted anyone who talked about him as a presidential nominee.

Eager to prove himself a good fellow, he wrote Alexander Long, a petty Democratic politician with an unsavory war record, a pledge to support any candidate, unless he disagreed with the party platform. To his trusted friend Van Buren he admitted somewhat ruefully that he had sent a letter that "goes a little too far" and urged him to suppress it if he thought it unwise. His trusted advisers lost no time in leaking the news to the press. When another pledge was requested, Chase replied defensively, ". . . my self-respect is worth more to me than fifty Presidencies. . . . To surrender my consciousness of doing right by binding myself, in advance, to, I know not what, is simply impossible for me. If it were possible, it would prove me unworthy of the trust and confidence of my countrymen." But he sent the pledge just the same.²⁵

In the way of his nomination seemed to stand only one issue — suffrage. The Republican platform declared arrogantly that Congress should insure Negro suffrage in the South while leaving the loyal states to decide the matter to their own satisfaction. Democrats insisted that the rule of states' rights should apply equally to North and South. When the war ended, Chase had said that there should be no recognition of any state as restored to full relations to the Union until it extended the vote to loyal Negroes, and at first the coquettishness of the Democratic Party had not lured him from his stand. To hints that a retreat might help his chances, he replied, "I believe I could refuse the throne of the world if it were offered me at the price of abandoning the cause of equal rights and exact justice to all men." Giddy with self-confidence, Chase softened his lofty tone not in the least when talking to party leaders. The response was unmistakable: his chances had suffered a serious setback.²⁶

A few days after his bold pronouncement to party leaders, Chase, seeing that he would have to choose between the Presidency and his principles, told the press that he thought suffrage should be conferred by

the states.²⁷ He could not have seriously believed that the Southern states would extend the vote to the Negro if left to their own devices; but still proclaiming the principle of universal suffrage, he was willing to temporize in practice. During the impeachment trial he seemed to have said that the rights of the Negro, championed by the Radicals, were not worth the price of the Constitution. Now in essence he seemed to say that they were not worth the price of the Democratic nomination. And many who had defended his motives during the trial wondered if law or expediency had determined his first decision.

Democrats, not satisfied with Chase's retreat, urged him to say he favored a broad basis of suffrage instead of the principle of universal suffrage. Having already compromised the substance of his beliefs, Chase might have been expected to deliver up the semblance of his stand, but he refused — not because of an obstinate conscience, but because he felt he could not win the election if he retreated further. His acumen told him that his only chance to beat Grant was to ride the wave of revulsion with Radical excesses that had split the Republican Party during the impeachment trial. At that time rumors that he was trying to influence doubtful Senators had blossomed into the story that he was offering them a place in a third party, composed of dissident Republicans and Democrats. The third-party movement had subsided with public denials from the Senators and ambiguous private asides from Chase, but left stranded on the sand was a great body of Northern Republicans, weary of hating the South and bored with hearing Congress re-fight the war on the campaign stump. Chase was convinced that the Democratic Party, its ranks thinned by the excesses of secessionists and Copperheads, would have to appeal to those citizens to win the election. With his Republican background and the applause of the moderate Republican press, he was certain that he alone could accomplish that feat.²⁸

His formula on suffrage was designed to bridge the extremes of North and South, the principle of universal suffrage satisfying the North that the Negro would be given the vote, and the principle of state control of suffrage satisfying the South that the Negro would not be given the vote. Chase's ingenious moderation, his concession to both

principle and prejudice, was a shrewd forecast of the future path of the Democratic Party. For the first time in his stormy career he seemed fitted to be a national President, representing diverse sections of the country in a synthesis of political reality and progressive hope. He knew that abandonment of a part of his formula—the words *universal suffrage*—would drive vacillating Republicans to Grant and relegate the Democratic Party to the fatal role of a sectional minority.

On all the other important questions before the convention Chase suggested the same safe middle course. A postwar business recession had induced the West to push hard for inflation so that it could settle its debts with money easily come by; and when the Republican convention would not yield, the Democrats were offered a chance to add another section of the country besides the South to its territorial conquests. The issue of inflation or deflation was to be determined by the question of whether the war bonds were to be redeemed in gold or in greenbacks. Chase stood foursquare for honest payment of the federal debt, but he was evasive about the nature of honesty. On the question of reconstruction he was equally mild and noncommittal, saying that he favored universal amnesty and opposed military government for the South, but refusing to go along with the hotbloods who wanted to declare the reconstruction acts of Congress unconstitutional.²⁹

Unfortunately, the Democrats meeting at Tammany Hall were in no mood for moderation, and on every major point Chase's advice to placate moderate Republicans was ignored. The principle of universal suffrage was shelved for the simple assertion that suffrage was a matter for state decision; Chase's euphemism about the public debt was defeated by the inflationary "Ohio Idea," and with a total disregard for the prerogatives of the Supreme Court the reconstruction acts of Congress were declared unconstitutional.³⁰

All eyes turned toward the Chief Justice, watching curiously for his reaction. Kate thought it inconceivable that her father should be so covetous of a slice of the Republican vote that he would let the Democratic nomination slip through his fingers. Immediately she wrote: "Your friends suggest that as soon as you see the Platform, which of course you will see tonight in the Press, you send such a telegram as may

be advisable and necessary to be read in open convention. . . ." ³¹

That night her father answered her: "I can accept well enough the platform as . . . sent . . . to me. But I can't say that I like it, nor do I suppose that anybody will like it." However, upon the advice of Van Buren, he had decided to answer all queries by saying that he was not ready to comment and that he would be gratified if "friends will agree not to have my name presented to the convention." Chase was more sincere than Kate would have liked. If he were nominated, he would have to resign from the court to campaign; and he was only willing to make that sacrifice if victory seemed assured. With the hope of a coalition exploded by the Democratic platform, his ardor began to cool. He put on a brave face for Kate: "You know how little I have desired a nomination. . . . I have feared all along that it could not be tendered to me on any platform which would allow any hope of considerable associations from the Republicans; and without that hope any other person might as well be nominated as I. And I am entirely satisfied with the opportunities of usefulness which my present duties afford." ³²

Perhaps it was true, as many people suspected, that Chase had begun his dangerous friendship with the Democrats more for Kate than for himself. They remarked on his apparent calm throughout the convention and observed thoughtfully how constantly he spoke of Kate in relation to his chances and how he rejoiced for her when it seemed that success was possible. For her sake Chase did not have the heart to withdraw completely from the race. He allowed her to give the pledge that if he voted at all that fall, he would in all probability vote for the Democratic nominee. But Kate's obsession with the Presidency had begun to worry him, and he cautioned her that night, "I am afraid my darling that you are acting too much the politician. Have a care. Don't do or say anything which may not be proclaimed on the housetops. I am so anxious about you that I cannot help wishing you were in Narragansett or here where I take all things very quietly & play croquet nearly every evening. I sleep as soundly as the heat will let me every night." ³³

While Chase was playing croquet, Kate was holding a feverish meeting with his friends in her New York hotel suite. Balloting had begun

immediately after the acceptance of the platform, and she wanted to review her convention strategy once again.

It was agreed that Chase's chance would come with a stalemate, when the Democrats, having exhausted the possibilities within their own party, would fix upon him as a compromise candidate. By holding back his name until the last minute, his backers were in danger of missing their chance altogether, but they stood to gain the support of all factions of the party. Chase's followers had seen the wisdom of Lincoln's advice to his friends in 1860, "Leave them in a mood to come to us if they shall be compelled to give up their first loves." Having allowed each group to test the strength of its favorite without his interference, Chase could pose as the neutral upon whom all could agree after conceding their own failure.³⁴

With no strong contenders at the convention a stalemate seemed certain to develop. The main problem for Kate and her young men was to find a delegation to nominate Chase at the right moment. Before the convention their hopes had centered on the delegation from New York, led by the ex-governor Horatio Seymour. "Governor Seymour, Mr. Van Buren insists, is perfectly sincere in his intention *under no* circumstances to be a candidate," Kate told her father confidently. She and her friends expected Seymour to decline in favor of Chase when nominated by his delegation; but Kate had had early warning of trouble. Everything, as far as developed, looked promising, she told her father, "only New York friends inside that close[d] corporation say their action is cautious, those outside say it is timid."³⁵ Van Buren warned that master politician Samuel J. Tilden was setting his back against the Chief Justice. With sparkling eyes and a pleasant smile he moved suavely among the New York delegates, his slender, straight figure immaculately clad in white linen pantaloons and jacket, an elegant watch chain hanging carelessly across his vest. The *New York World* commented admiringly: "To shiver a lance with Mr. Tilden is rather a dangerous job, and the delegate who succeeds in out-generalizing him in any trial of skill will have to be very bright indeed, and make his morning devotions quite early."³⁶

After the first day of voting Kate questioned her staff about whether

or not they should change their strategy and bring her father's name before the convention immediately. Van Buren reported that he had canvassed the New York delegation, which had adopted an infuriating wait-and-see policy, and had found that only one third of them favored Chase. No decision was made; and, afterward, when everyone had left, Kate sat alone in her hot hotel room thinking of what she had written her father that day: "There are snares and pitfalls everywhere. Oh, if the convention would only have the courage to do right!" The city slept fitfully that night. Staring into the darkness, Kate wondered about the rumors that a majority of delegates now recognized her father as the best available candidate. If only a delegation would nominate him! Closing her eyes, she could picture him sitting at his desk in Washington. Dear Father! What did he think of the platform and the first ballots of the convention? Before falling asleep, she may have given a thought to little Willie, being cared for by his nurse at Narragansett. She had meant to visit him during the week end; but with matters so unsettled in New York, she had had to stay on.³⁷ There was too much at stake there for her to leave. After all, Willie was in good hands.

The next morning from her place in the balcony she nervously watched the voting continue. It was probable that her father's name would be presented to the convention that afternoon; and Kate sensed that the time was right now that all the other candidates had tested their strength and the exhausted delegates had grown impatient for a decision so that they could go home. At any moment she expected the letter from her father announcing that he would accept the platform. She was convinced that when his pledge was heard by the convention, a wave of gratification and enthusiasm would sweep him into the nomination.

The endless roll calls went on while she waited for the arrival of the Washington mail. When it came, there was no letter from her father.

Frantically Kate looked for Van Buren, but it was midafternoon before she found him. Urgently she begged him to issue the magic pledge. Van Buren was evasive. He had no authority, he said. Kate insisted, and finally he agreed grudgingly that he would share the respon-

sibility with Mr. Long. A shout went up on the floor and was echoed in the balconies. The convention had accorded Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase one half a vote and much applause. Kate waited for Van Buren to speak. But he was silent, the New York delegation did nothing, and the critical moment passed. After the eighteenth ballot, as a landslide was in the making for General W. S. Hancock, Chase's friend Seymour, who was chairman of the convention, hastily called for adjournment. There was a thunderous negative vote, but he banged down his gavel and left the chair.³⁸ The delegates had no recourse but to wait for the next day. Even if Seymour had not carried his delegation to Chase that day, he had saved the situation by arbitrarily calling a halt to Hancock's progress.

The excitement in New York was intense, and the thunderstorm that broke over the parched city that night did not clear the air. Saloons were crowded, Fourteenth Street was filled with spectators, and the betting was high. Newspapers predicted that Chase was the coming man, but their enthusiasm for his chances did not appear to be shared by his friends, who tried to look cheerful in public but privately were furious with the New York delegation for not coming to his support. Dreading Chase's nomination, Grant's supporters were said to be elated about his small showing — half a vote on four ballots out of eighteen.³⁹

As a hot, woolen dusk fell upon New York, the convention splintered into tight little groups, caucusing in hotel rooms, restaurants, and bars throughout the city. The fate of the convention hung upon their decisions, for the tired delegates were determined to make the fifth day of the convention the last. Later it was said that the most important conference was held at Delmonico's restaurant that night. Before going off to take part in the meetings of their respective delegations, certain New Yorkers, including the inscrutable Mr. Tilden, conferred hurriedly with some members of the Ohio delegation, including General McCook. Horatio Seymour's name was mentioned, but what they decided they kept secret until it was divulged the next day on the floor of the convention.⁴⁰

Kate did what she could in those few remaining hours. The letter from her father had arrived, but too late. Faced with the mounting

conviction that Chase would decline the nomination, a feeling encouraged by Van Buren's refusal to issue the Chief Justice's acceptance of the platform, she finally took matters into her own hands. The *New York Tribune* reported that she had received word from her father that he would accept the platform and that one of his friends had refuted the story that he would not accept the nomination. The report had no more status than the other rumors that the city was whispering that night; for throughout the furor, Chase, on the advice of Van Buren, remained silent. He commented only that he would be glad when the nomination was made.⁴¹ The meetings, the arguments, and excitement lasted far into the night, but at last the bars were empty, hotel corridors deserted, and the lights put out in the hotel rooms. Her eyes dark against her pale face, Kate was exhausted with the strain. There was nothing more that she could do for her father.

The next morning the New York delegation met at the Fifth Avenue Hotel; and, not suspecting that some of their members had a different plan, approved Seymour's suggestion that they nominate Chase when the strength of Senator Thomas A. Hendricks began to decline. They hoped to get the support of Ohio and Wisconsin immediately, and it was said that several other states would follow.⁴²

They proved to be mistaken about Ohio. Chase's wartime trade policies in the Ohio-Mississippi Valley had made him unpopular with the Democrats of his native state. Ohio had let Chase down in 1860, and it was about to disappoint him again. After a stormy session, that delegation passed a resolution that it would not support him. A friend of Chase's said, "A drunken harangue by an eminent Democrat . . . lost [Chase] Ohio and just enough votes to insure defeat."⁴³

The convention met, tense with expectation. General Hancock's supporters deserted him for Senator Hendricks; and on the twenty-first ballot, it was plain that a landslide was starting. Just as the convention seemed about to swell out of control in its desire to nominate someone and go home, Ohio got the floor. Kate saw General McCook clamber up on a bench to be recognized; and, straining forward to make out what he was saying, she heard, ". . . put into nomination against his inclination, but no longer against his honor, the name of Horatio Sey-

mour!" The crowd roared its approval. Seymour repeated the piece he had given on the first day of balloting—that honor forbade his acceptance. Tears filled his eyes as he praised the great state of Ohio, the great United States, and the great Democratic Party, but, he concluded, ". . . may God bless you for your kindness to me, but your candidate I cannot be." As if by a prearranged signal, New York fell in line behind Ohio, and the landslide started. Protesting weakly and weeping profusely, Seymour was hurried out of the hall by friends while the nomination went to him by acclamation. Another bitter blow! Frank Blair was nominated for the Vice-Presidency. As a belated afterthought the cheering convention tendered its thanks to the Chief Justice for the "justice, dignity, and impartiality with which he presided over the Court of Impeachment." Chase "was on every man's tongue, but in no man's heart," said one journal smugly. "He flew into and flew out of Tammany Hall like that cuckoo Wordsworth declared to be not a substantial bird, but only a 'wandering voice.'" ⁴⁴ Kate was stunned.

A Washington newspaperman informed Chase of the result. He said only, "Does Mrs. Sprague know? And how does she bear it?" ⁴⁵

Kate was not able to write her father until the next day. ⁴⁶

New York
10 July 1868

My dearest Father,

You have been most cruelly deceived & shamefully used by the man whom you trusted implicitly & the *country* must suffer for his duplicity. I would not write you . . . until I had carefully gone over in my mind all the circumstances that had come under my knowledge of the action of Mr. Van Buren. . . . Had Mr. Kennedy had the authority to act for you, you would have been as certainly nominated on the wave of the enthusiasm created in the Convention by the $\frac{1}{2}$ vote cast by California day before yesterday as anything could be. Mr. Van Buren's telegraph to you "to answer no questions in regard to the Platform" was the block he put in the way of your nomination. . . . Mr. Tilden & Mr. Seymour have done this work & Mr. Van Buren has been *their* tool. This is my honest belief. . . . Do dear Father in the future, be guided by the advice of some of those who are devoted to you,

but who are more suspicious than your own noble heart will allow you to be —

With all this *you personally* can have nothing to regret. Your friends have worked nobly & the universal disappointment to-day is amazing — Not a flag floats nor is the semblance of rejoicing visible anywhere. . . . You can form no conception of the depression here.

Your devoted Katie.

Numbly Kate ordered her trunks packed for her return to the cool green world at Narragansett Pier, but she knew that not even the roar of the ocean beating against its rocky shore would be able to drown out in her ears the sound of the convention at its moment of decision. It should have been cheering for her father. If he had taken her advice, and if her husband had given his financial support, she was certain that she would have been able to overcome all the obstacles — the lingering suspicions of her father's Radical past, the opposition of Ohio, the slowness of New York, the desire of the perspiring delegates to find an easy way out of their stalemate so they could go home. Perhaps if Kate herself had been able to go on the floor of the convention, she might even have been able to make up for her father's misguided silence and his incompetent and treacherous friends,⁴⁷ but she had been imprisoned by an unbending masculine prejudice against petticoat politicians. A woman's place was in the home or the ballroom, on committees discussing art and charity, not on a convention floor or in a caucus room. Kate could become the nation's most powerful political hostess, her salon crowded with men seeking her opinions on matters of state; but she could not be a successful campaign manager. She had thought herself uniquely privileged, but she found that there were boundaries even for her.

Her father was as bad as the rest. He, too, had much of the male prejudice against women in politics. Perhaps he was ashamed of Kate's unwholesome attachment to him and his ambition, of her greed for his nomination; perhaps he was ashamed of himself for having planted the fatal seed in her heart. Whatever his reason, at the critical moment he had unaccountably ignored her advice. When she urged him to support

the platform openly, he read Van Buren's telegram and was silent. When she informed him that Aiken was devoting himself to bourbon instead of delegates, he replied that surely she was mistaken. He had told his supporters at the convention, ". . . [Van Buren] is wise, and may be implicitly depended upon"; and at first, unwilling to accept Kate's judgment to the contrary, he blamed Seymour alone for his disappointment. Eventually Van Buren, Kate, and Seymour were able to change his mind, and he accepted Seymour's statement that ". . . the hours of deepest humiliation that he had ever passed in his life were those immediately succeeding his acceptance of the nomination—that he had only accepted it because he was physically and morally broken down." 48

Like her father, Kate looked at men coldly, tested them by a narrow scale, and discarded those who were useless. But unlike her father, she was quick to see who was serving their cause and who was not, and she could not understand his unwillingness to mistrust men like Van Buren. Unfortunately, Chase was as poor a judge of others as he was of himself. Disappointed and cheated by his friends when in the Treasury Department, he suffered the same fate at the Democratic convention. Aiken was not a traitor, but he was a sot. Seymour was a friend, but he was a weakling. Tilden turned out to be a cunning enemy, and Van Buren, the man Chase trusted implicitly, was Tilden's tool. Kate was shrewd, but unheeded. Like her father she nourished implacable hatreds. One day she would have her revenge on Tilden, that mild-mannered, pleasant gentleman from New York.

Kate and her father watched the Democrats struggle through the campaign they might have led. Radicalism was the political disease of the times; and, although Seymour was not an intemperate man, that hotspur Frank Blair soon had the party in difficulties with his extreme attacks on Republicans. Seeing the great floating vote of the country ebb toward the Republicans, Chase's Democratic friends entreated with him to speak out, but throughout the campaign the Chief Justice remained in majestic neutrality behind the doors of the Supreme Court. In spite of the wild words of Frank Blair and the drabness of Seymour, the Republicans, with a national hero as a candidate, barely won the

election by the use of the bayonet in the South and the bloody shirt in the North.⁴⁹

The outcome had been foreseen by the moderate press of the country. After the Democratic convention, the *New York Herald* had commented: "The die is cast. The Democratic Convention has decided that our next President shall be General Grant. There was a splendid opportunity offered this Convention, in the nomination of Chief Justice Chase, to carry off the balance of power from the Republican camp, North and South, East and West, and to inaugurate in the approaching Presidential election a substantial and enduring conservative revolution." If Chase's moderation had prevailed at New York, he might have steered the Democrats to power, but, as Kate said, "when the South seceded, the brains of the [Democratic] party went with it."⁵⁰

The convention had been costly — to the Democrats, to the nation, but especially to the Chase household itself. Whether or not the breach that had developed between Kate and her father — and Kate and her husband — could be healed, no one could say.

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CHAPTER IV

Sprague for President

CHASE left Narragansett in a troubled mood after a melancholy vacation with the Spragues. When the convention ended, he had wanted to put the whole affair behind him,¹ but Kate would forget nothing. Listening to her pour out her bitterness and anger was a heavy strain on her father. As he listened to her talk of revenge, as he heard her plans for their next campaign, he realized that she would never give up. By that summer they seemed to be approaching a parting of the way.

Too late Chase realized how much the convention had cost him. By reaching out for the nomination from the Supreme Court bench, he had broken a sacred unwritten law of American politics; and he paid for his offense by losing the veneration that should have been his solace when forced to reconcile himself to second place. Editors and public leaders pressed forward in their haste to throw the first stone. Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, who always had one foot in heaven and the other in politics, issued a public denial that he had ever favored Chase's candidacy. "I have for years, as a leader in public affairs, deemed him, like his greenbacks, as promising more on the face than they are worth in gold. . . . Ambition lifts some men toward things noble and good; makes them large and generous. Other men's ambition blurs the sharp lines and distinctions between right and wrong, and leaves them, in the eagerness of overselfish desires, to become a prey of bad men. I have for years felt that Mr. Chase's ambition was consuming the better elements of his nature." The press estimated that few public men had descended more rapidly in the public esteem than Chase. "Dishonored, self-debauched, friendless, he goes to his long home, an example of the

calamitous, disgraceful consequences of political prostitution," wrote one editor.²

Sick as he was at his own humiliation, Chase was far more disturbed by what he had seen at Narragansett. A serious rift had developed between Kate and her husband. Kate might have been persuaded to overlook Sprague's vote in the impeachment trial, but she would never forgive him for not financing her father's bid for the Democratic nomination. She seemed to blame him as much as Tilden and Van Buren for the disaster at New York. Beneath their violent quarrels Chase sensed something more, a silent current that he did not understand, or perhaps did not want to understand; but of one thing he was convinced: Sprague was nearing the end of his patience. After leaving them, he warned Kate, ". . . you must reflect, my darling, that there can be but one head to a family, and . . . that it is the wife's part after the husband chooses to act in any matter upon his own judgment without asking hers, to acquiesce cheerfully and affectionately. This is part of the marriage vow: and the best way, by all odds, to . . . retain the confidence, the affection, and the consolation of her husband."³

Chase was willing to forgive Sprague gladly; and it seemed to him that Kate also could afford to, for during the four and a half years of their marriage he had offered many compensations for his shortcomings. At first, dazzled at finding himself married to the most beautiful woman in Washington, Sprague had done everything Kate asked of him. He had accepted her father as his father, and Chase's debts as his debts. He had taken up her father's political cause, provided money to educate Nettie, and given Kate freedom, servants, Worth gowns, and a son. But Kate was never satisfied. Retiring gloomily to the background, Sprague wondered whether or not he had been fortunate in winning Kate after all. Perhaps in his heart he knew that he had never won her and that he never could; but, in one last attempt to make her happy, he had given her Canonchet, one of the most elaborate and expensive summer cottages in America.

When the golden age of holidays was ushered in by the end of the war, Kate saw rural villages of the North transformed into sophisticated resorts with huge, glittering hotels, like overgrown museums

celebrating nothing more than the people's insatiable demands for immensity and multitude. The wealthy war contractors, railroad princes, and Senators who flocked together at Saratoga, Newport, Long Branch, and the other fashionable resorts of the North came not in search of solitude or repose or simplicity. They brought the market place with them, and holidays were interludes of frenzied leisure devoted to proving that life was getting bigger and better. Looking at all the splendor—at the opera houses, the immense dining rooms, and gold-encrusted corridors—Kate had decided that she would have something better, something that would be all hers; and her obliging husband had let her build Canonchet, her New England castle on Narragansett Bay.

The house became an obsession with Kate. As work progressed, she hired more workmen, expanded her plans, made revisions until the original farmhouse on the site was devoured by the relentless growth of her invention. She would give orders for a suite of rooms in the north wing to be done in a certain style—French provincial or Louis XIV—workmen would finish the rooms with painstaking care; furniture would be ordered and installed; Kate would step across the threshold, stare absently for a moment at the completed room, and then abruptly turn and walk out. Calling for the foreman, she would announce that the suite was unsatisfactory, that it would all have to be done over in the style of Queen Anne. Rhode Islanders were scandalized at the endless procession of painters, carpenters, and cabinetmakers who came and went along the ocean drive in front of Canonchet, and they began to speculate about the rumors that Kate and her husband were quarreling over her extravagance.⁴

Slowly the great monument took shape—a Victorian Gothic mansion of over sixty rooms, said to have cost almost a million dollars. Dense foliage protected the house from public view, and not until their carriages turned into the road leading through the Sprague property did Kate's guests get a glimpse of her masterpiece. The house looked like the result of a series of swift inspirations that found each other's company disquieting: dormer windows jutted out from the roofs of the towers, topped with spires like spindles on a highboy; a great colonnade

swept around the front of the house with classical hauteur; balconies sprang from windows and hung uneasily in mid-air. The labyrinth of rooms was furnished with some of the finest *objets d'art* found in Europe, including a hand-carved spiral staircase, said to have cost fifty thousand dollars.

Surrounded by hundreds of acres of forest wilderness, Canonchet was not far from the shore of the bay, where, seated on the rocks out of reach of the spray, Kate could watch the surf hiss over the reefs in miniature cataracts, depositing blood-red kelp on the beach. It was a site with natural wonders surpassing those of most of the popular summer resorts of the East, and Canonchet itself rivaled the best of their hotels. Indeed, it was too much like a hotel to suit Sprague's tastes. A retinue of servants was necessary just to dust its bric-a-brac; and Sprague knew that he would always find a large crowd of Kate's clever, superior friends there when he came down for week ends from his office in Providence. He missed the familiar comfort of the old farm, but Kate loved Canonchet. It was her kingdom and her consolation after her father's defeat at the Democratic convention.⁵ There she planned to spend most of the following winter while Nettie kept house for her father at Sixth and E streets in Washington.

In many ways Kate still completely overshadowed her younger sister, but Nettie did not mind. Content with her art work and her friends, she had no desire to be the belle of Washington or the confidante of politicians. But she was very popular; and, whenever she was away from Washington, her father's letters were always filled with good wishes from her many friends. John Hay, for one, liked her better than Kate. "She is a splendidly accomplished girl with more heart and culture than the *ainée*," he said. "She is large and blonde and, barring the irregular profile, like a Flemish Venus."⁶

The immodest spectacle at Narragansett did not appeal to Nettie. Shortly after Chase got the letter from Kate that began, "You have been most cruelly deceived and shamefully used," he got another from his younger daughter with no mention of the New York convention. "My own dear Father," she wrote, "I am in love with Minnesota. . . . Do you know I think that I have inherited . . . the old pioneer spirit,

for when I feel myself beyond civilization, a kind of wild delight comes over me, my Indian wakes and gives a war whoop. . . ." Illustrating her story with pen and ink drawings, she described her trip across the country from sunset until dawn in an open wagon. "Such a drive! It was perfectly delightful! First we had the sunset, clear, bright, red, and gold, then the moon, but it was rather young and went to bed early—but the Aurora took its place, and illuminated the whole northern sky."⁷ Kate would have been lost in Minnesota; but Chase, weary of political intrigue and the tension between the Spragues, went North for a real vacation with Nettie on the Croix River.

Stopping at Narragansett on his way back to Washington for the autumn session of the court, he told Kate that he had noticed during the summer that his heartbeat was irregular. Kate was frightened. She knew that her father had had a stroke after her mother died; and, alarmed by his pallor and weakness, she urged him to see a specialist immediately. Chase's concern about Kate almost exceeded her fears about his health. Hearing from friends that she was overtaxing herself with Canonchet, he wrote her tenderly: "My dear, dear child, don't be anxious about matters & don't exert yourself. Think how precious your health is above all things except Christian faith & Christ's love."⁸

That winter Kate and her father seemed out of tune with the glad cries of optimism that were coming from Washington. With the election in their pockets the Republicans could afford to be expansive, and they were kind enough to see that President Johnson's last reception was brilliantly attended. There was such a jam that pickpockets, arrested in the crowd, could not be taken out of the White House, but no one took the incident as an ill omen. In two days Grant was to become President, and the country expected miracles of him. "Grant represented order," wrote Henry Adams. "He was a great soldier, and the soldier always represented order. . . . The task of bringing the Government back to regular practices, and of restoring moral and mechanical order to administration" was his.⁹

It was fitting that Grant held his inaugural ball in the nation's counting house, the Treasury Building. A new era had indeed begun, but not the kind anticipated. The war had bred a revolution, and the agrarian society which had controlled the government from its birth had given way to a new power. Soon bankers and industrialists would march upon the capital, and politicians and lobbyists would be greedily dividing up the public spoils. In anguish Senator Grimes would cry out, "Why, the war has corrupted everybody and everything."¹⁰

As early as March, 1869, before the signs of the time were clear, one lone public leader raised his voice to warn the country of trouble. It was not the idealistic Senator Sumner who foresaw a danger to freedom; it was not the scholarly Senator Fessenden who pointed at the dislocated economy. It was William Sprague, the quiet, shy, boyish Senator who had never before intruded to any extent upon the business of the Senate.

Sprague was painfully aware that his education was inferior to that of his fellow Senators; and until that spring he had usually covered his inadequacy with silence, for fear that, if he ever opened his mouth to do more than register his vote, he would reveal his ignorance. The appreciative state legislature of Rhode Island had re-elected him to a second term in the Senate for his discretion, but there came a time when Sprague could no longer remain silent. Less than two weeks after Grant's inauguration, he arose to deliver a speech — the first in a series of speeches that was to be one of the most derogatory and provocative ever heard from a Senator. As one New York newspaper said, he "turned state's evidence" on his whole breed of millionaire Senators;¹¹ and in the course of his spectacular tirade he attacked most of the institutions the American people counted hallowed — the American economic system, the Senate, lawyers and judges, both political parties, the press, the Supreme Court, and President. He questioned the valor of Union veterans and the virtue of American women, especially, by implication, that of his wife. He spared nothing except the church and his mother; perhaps with so many enemies the Senator felt he needed her and God on his side. And all the time he was tearing down idols, Sprague was putting up another — one of himself as he wanted to be

— the courageous soldier, wise legislator, protector of freedom, savior of the economy.

He began quietly enough. During the discussion of a money bill, he got up from his desk near the center aisle and earnestly warned the Senate, contentedly watching business boom, that the economy was like "a mad horse in full run with broken reins, or a steam engine without a regulator," and that ahead was national disaster. "If, sirs, you are not standing on a volcano, I am no judge of things," he declared. The fault was with government financial policies, dictated by bankers like Jim Fiske and Jay Gould, who knew nothing of business. Unless their influence was countered, Sprague said, the country would be ruined. His panacea was a United States Council of Finance, a poor man's bank which would make cheap money available for investments large and small.¹²

Sprague's warning was received with mild surprise, but little astonishment. Even a Senator whose silence had come to be depended upon could be allowed the liberty of one idea, and the Senate would have given odds beforehand that if Sprague were to give birth to an idea it would have to do with business. He was the richest man in the Senate; and, although no one supposed his wealth to reflect a genius for business, everyone knew that he gave more thought to his cotton spindles than to legislation. His colleagues suspected that his cotton spindles accounted for his pessimism, that actually his own finances, not those of the country, were shaky.

Sprague vehemently denied that he was motivated by his own difficulties.¹³ He made a pathetic attempt to give his arguments the dignity of objectivity by salting them liberally with historical allusions and lengthy quotations from obscure economic histories, but his stabs at erudition fell far short of the mark. When he read from the *American Cyclopedia*, the few Senators who were listening must have smiled. They had feasted on the Latin quotations of Charles Sumner and the mellifluous rhetoric of Roscoe Conkling. The Senator from Rhode Island was making a fool of himself.

Sprague sensed the amused condescension of his colleagues. They had always treated him like a puppy dog, he said bitterly. "If they

wanted any favors from me, they came and patted me on the back, said, 'Sprague is a nice fellow, nicest fellow in the world, but too modest and too generous to get along in politics.'" When he finally ventured to make some sincere proposals after six years of silent and, for the most part, respectful attention in the Senate, none of his colleagues dignified his remarks with so much as a comment.¹⁴

Sick of being treated with scorn, Sprague raged at the citadel of senatorial arrogance. Taking the floor a second time, he observed that two thirds of his colleagues were lawyers and charged that the United States Government was a tyranny of "lawyers and of judges . . . educated upon the quarrels and exhibitions of the worst passions of human nature, practiced in the dissensions, influenced by the vices of the people. . . ." Facing his fellow Senators squarely, he thundered, "I know of no instance where men educated in the [law] . . . have entered into the practical business of life . . . where not only property, but reputation and honor have been lost." The galleries stirred with surprise, and Senators put down their newspapers to stare in amazement at the aroused Senator from Rhode Island.

Explaining his previous silence, he said, "For six years . . . I would rather have stormed a triple line of presented bayonets or a park of artillery in full play" than face the indifference, inattention, and contempt of his colleagues. He had a right to their respect, Sprague said. In 1861, while Congress was blissfully unaware of the impending war, he alone had "scent[ed] the battle from afar off," and alerted the people to the crisis by coming to the defense of Washington.¹⁵ The Senators listened absently. They had seen Sprague slumped at his desk for too many years to honor him as they had the young war governor who had led his troops on the field of battle at Bull Run. Sprague had traded on that credit too long: in the era of peace politicians were bored with military heroes, except, of course, General Grant.

There was a stir of anticipation in the chamber as Senator Nye of Nevada arose to defend the honor of lawyers and Senators. In common law, he began, there existed a procedure for indicting common scolds, and he feared Senator Sprague was liable. "The Senator from Rhode Island says he has been puzzled to understand the legislation of Con-

gress. Is that a lawyer's fault? Perhaps if he had been a little more of a lawyer he would not have been puzzled so much." The crowds in the galleries snickered.

"[Senator Sprague] complains that the lawyers in this Senate did not tell him that there was going to be war," continued Nye with a wicked smile. "A watchman he, and want telling? He stood on the ramparts of Rhode Island. He snuffed, like the war-horse of Job, the breeze afar off. . . . Why, sir, the notes of war were sounded from every post and upon every pillar of the nation; and yet the honorable Senator would seem to find fault that a lawyer did not leave here and go down to Rhode Island and tell him there was going to be war." ¹⁶

Reporters gave Nye's heavy humor some slight attention; but Gideon Welles, the elder statesman, seemed almost alone in marking what Sprague had said. "Sprague, though no orator, has been telling the senators some truths," he observed in his diary. "At first they were disposed to treat his attack on . . . lawyers with levity, and Nye, the blackguard of the Senate, attacked him with severity, but though this amused the galleries for the moment, Sprague's remarks remain." ¹⁷

Stung by his colleague's sarcasm, William Sprague replied with a speech that created a sensation. Looking up at the galleries, he remarked scornfully, "You have been educated to laugh and to make light of the most serious things. You have been indoctrinated into a frivolous, thoughtless, senseless disposition." He was reminded, Sprague said, of an idiot who refused to leave a burning building. His audience was not at fault alone: American society itself was rotten. ". . . the state of American society to-day has less virtue, less morality in it, than that of any civilized Government in the world. . . . It is the striving of those who are rich to be richer and the striving of the poor to imitate the rich, and in that process virtue is lost."

The question of virtue was weighing heavily on the young Senator's mind. In the next breath he cried, "Where is there a father who leaves his house with any security? . . . Where is there a husband who closes his doors with satisfaction?" ¹⁸

Sprague's audience was silent and embarrassed. Before them was the spectacle of a man committing political suicide. He might conceivably

attack Senators and lawyers with impunity, but not the virtue of American women. There was excited speculation in the cloakrooms when the Senate adjourned for the day. What possessed Senator Sprague? Had he lost his senses? Why had he felt compelled to ask, "Where is there a husband who closes his doors with satisfaction?"

Stories were circulated that he was on a drunken spree, and Sprague himself accused Pennsylvania's Senator Cameron of trying to tempt him. "[Cameron] would take me down to the committee room and set out champagne and ask me to drink. Finally I said to him: 'Cameron, you are a vicious old fellow. I am a young man and you are an old sinner, and you are always putting temptation in my way.'" Sprague was indignant that he should be laughed off as a drunken fool. "[The Senators] may be assured that my words and courage do not rest upon wine, or whiskey, or any other stimulant," he told them with dignity.¹⁹

Certainly there was no single explanation of the bewildering succession of moods Sprague had displayed to his colleagues. At first, perhaps partly to satisfy his wife that he had opinions of his own, he had expressed his honest conviction that the country was being led toward economic disaster by the stupidity of powerful bankers; and in his second speech he was preoccupied with irritation at the Senate for not being electrified by his warning. Perhaps, too, there was in his rage against lawyers and judges a suggestion of his feelings toward his father-in-law. But there was more to his third speech than concern about economic stability or anger at the smugness of his associates. Sprague explained his excitement as based "upon the knowledge of the shrinkage of property and the loss of virtue going on around me." He denied that he was inspired by the shrinkage of his own property; but he readily admitted that he was personally acquainted with the loss of virtue. When anonymous writers slyly suggested to him, "You must be familiar with that disturbing element in . . . American society," Sprague replied bitterly, "Certainly, if I was not familiar with American society I should not have hazarded the statement that I made. I make no statement in this Senate or elsewhere that I cannot substantiate by the clearest proof and the best evidence."²⁰

Senator Anthony, Sprague's colleague from Rhode Island, came to

the defense of his constituents, saying, "Our husbands close their doors without any apprehensions of the purity of the domestic hearth."²¹ But obviously Sprague did not. He suspected Kate of infidelity.

Even before their marriage he had been suspicious of her. Kate had always considered herself above the rules of ordinary society, and she had done as she pleased. Her father's prominence and her own brilliance gave her some immunity from gossip; but, as one Ohioan remarked, Kate was "a little too independent to care what the world said about her to make her cautious."²²

Her independence had made an indelible impression on Ohio during the years when Chase was governor. As her father's official hostess Kate had been accepted in the best society, but the prominent women of the state had immediately taken a violent dislike to her. Most men had thought her fascinating. One in particular, wealthy Dick Nevins, had paid her special attention, at first carrying on a mild flirtation, and finally openly demonstrating his feelings by taking her riding around town with his favorite team of blooded trotters. No one would have given their affair a second thought if Dick Nevins had not been married. When Chase heard some of the stories being whispered in Columbus parlors, he had refused to allow Kate to see the young man any more. What happened afterward no one would ever know. The malicious women of Columbus tattled on, saying that Kate arranged clandestine meetings with Nevins and that when Chase came home unexpectedly one day to find Kate with the young man, the enraged father had beaten him with a whip.²³

Kate would never forgive the gossips for their stories. "She could be arrogant when she chose, and was frequently so toward women whom she never loved, and whom, after her dark experience at Columbus, where she was cruelly maligned, she hated," a close family friend of the Chases would say years later.²⁴

When William Sprague first met Kate in Cleveland a year after the Nevins affair, he, too, heard about the scandal; and he did not begin to court her in earnest until months later when he was assured that, although indiscreet, she was a respectable young lady. Before their

marriage, he did take the precaution of having a private detective investigate her life in Ohio, but apparently nothing was uncovered that jeopardized Kate's honor, at least nothing that diminished Sprague's desire to cement his relationship with the Chase family.²⁵ Sprague had to overlook a few indiscretions: he himself had been guilty of some in the past.

Kate had not let her marriage interfere with her friendship with men other than her husband, nor had she ever let Sprague's absence restrict her social life. Her father was well aware of the dangers she was courting by her defiance of convention. Haunted by the rumors of divorce that had swept through the country the first summer she went to Europe alone, he urged her to give up her independent social life and take her place beside her husband, but Kate did not seem to hear him.

Early in the winter following the Democratic convention, Sprague had intended to go to Savannah on business, but a sore foot forced him to postpone his trip until the middle of January, 1869. He was gone a long time; but Kate, occupied with her own social affairs, did not miss him. Sprague was not back more than a few weeks before he suddenly became obsessed with "the loss of virtue" going on around him. How he began to suspect Kate and who he thought was her lover remain a mystery. Perhaps, enraged by the spectacle Sprague was making of himself in the Senate, Kate told him that she was going to have a baby at the end of October.²⁶

Sprague did not finish with his third speech. In less than a week after his public attack on American womanhood, Kate slipped quietly into the Senate gallery, "her superb cashmere falling in rich folds around her, the black lace of her mantilla-like head-dress, adorned with a single rose of vivid carnation, relieving the pallor of her icily-beautiful face." Her husband took the floor and with a noticeable effort to appear calm repeated his attacks on his colleagues and American society, which, he said, was being demoralized by ". . . Americans who travel abroad, mix and mingle in that filth and come home here to inculcate the immoralities that they have seen upon their own society." Coldly

Kate stared down at her husband. The implication was clear. It was well known that she had recently made two trips abroad.²⁷

Mortified, she fled to Narragansett; but her father, kept in Washington by the business of the court, was not able to escape. Although he was still sharing the same house with his son-in-law, Chase was forced to write Kate sadly: "I have not seen the Governor since you left. God in his mercy grant that this dark cloud may pass away."²⁸ But the dark cloud was growing darker, for on that same day Sprague made his final climactic speech in the Senate.

Seeing a politician bare his soul in public was a novel spectacle for Washington, and there was a buzz of unrestrained excitement as spectators and Senators waited for Sprague to open the fight he had promised the day before. The Senate was a strange confessional chamber—a dark hole, badly ventilated, its walls upholstered like a child's patchwork, its ornate decoration the embodiment of florid senatorial imagination. But the crowds forgot their surroundings when Senator Sprague stood up to speak. "I have not come before the Senate or the country for any idle display or for any purpose of sensation," he began. "I certainly do not desire to be the object of the gaze of the people of the United States. . . . It has always been my nature to hide myself from the public gaze. It was my boyish nature."²⁹ It was the sight of the great money powers corrupting society and government that impelled him to speak out, Sprague declared. Those powers controlled the public credit, which, he said, "is like the virtue of a woman, easily to be stabbed in secret."³⁰

Previously Sprague had indirectly attacked Chase by saying that he had favored the election of General Grant "in opposition to the aspirations of one connected with me by family ties." Now he fell upon the Supreme Court with all his newly kindled sarcasm, charging that the court, despite new evidence on a problem, always gave "to the new subject with new light the decision that it gave to the old subject with the old light. It is for the purpose of maintaining their prestige, regardless of the merits of the case."³¹

Politicians were no better than judges, according to the angry Senator from Rhode Island. He, for one, was disillusioned with being

a tool for the great powers, the money powers controlling his state. "There was not an atom of principle in their work; there was a greed for power only.

"I ask the people . . . if such unscrupulous powers growing up among them are safe to their liberties? I answer a thousand times, no." Even the President had fallen prey to "that canker that had possessed the body-politic. . . ." ³²

In a frenzy of destruction, Sprague caught his breath to pull down the last bulwark of his pride—his Rhode Island troops. "I saw the impending war," he said. "When it came I went into the armories and among the people, and organized twelve hundred men, with new officers. But in the regiment the great power exhibited itself." He came to Washington with a battle plan for victory, said Sprague, but opposed to him were the rich men of his regiment, afraid to move. "Remember," he told his stunned audience, "there is nothing so cowardly as five hundred thousand dollars—except a million." He told about the refusal of the First Rhode Island Regiment to move toward Bull Run because its enlistment had run out. "Their lives were precious; the lives of the three years' men [in the second regiment] were not precious. They were poor mechanics; they were fit only to die; but the million dollars would seek safety in a miserable subterfuge." Only by threatening to expose their cowardice had he been able to quell the disturbance, Sprague said, but he had not been able to save them from disgrace during the battle.

Now Sprague was having no difficulty speaking. His words tumbled out as he described his vivid memories of that day. The worst coward had been Burnside. "Where was he who was placed in high command? . . . He had left, he had deserted them. He sought safety in safe places." Sprague described how he had galloped in to fill the breach and struck down his men's muskets to a level with the enemy. When Confederate pressure became too great, when the Union troops gave way, the day might still have been won, cried Sprague, had the First Rhode Island Regiment stood firm to guard the rear. But they retreated. "With blanched face I was begged by the commander, who was stupefied by the million dollars, to go to the rear and surrender the

troops, as he would not have them cut up. . . . Sir, we were disgraced." He reminded the country that the first regiment had continued its retreat through Washington to the safety of Providence. "The million dollars was asked to wait a week," he said scornfully. "The enemy was coming on. . . . Certainly no one would now refuse. A rat will fight in a corner; a coward will sometimes be worked up to a frenzy. Sir, the million dollars would not stay. The very next train put distance between them and their fanciful pursuers."

Too overwrought to hide the resentment that had galled him for years, he cried out, "How did the country and my colleagues in this Senate reward [Burnside's] action? By a commission as a brevet brigadier general!" And how had the country rewarded the fighting governor? He had remained "but an actor without commission or authority."

Interrupted by his indignant colleague from Rhode Island, Sprague abruptly broke off his tirade and, as if awakening from a trance, picked up his manuscript, read some paragraphs in support of his financial plan, and then sat down. He was finished.³³

For all his zeal in unmasking corruption, the Senator had not been able to confess his own great crime. He had almost revealed himself when he denounced the war as rotten. ". . . your war has not been won for the liberties of any class of people; your war . . . has had no great virtuous principle at the bottom of it. It has had simple contentions for power. . . ." ³⁴ But he did not go on to say toward what dangerous path his estimate of the war had pulled him. He spared little other than himself, for he had the irreligious disregard for institutions that marks a revolutionary—or a traitor. Sprague the reformer, like Sprague the traitor, estranged himself from the normal open warmth of human life. Publicly proclaiming that he was "under no obligation to any living person for what he [was]," Sprague stood alone; and before he had finished his public scoldings, it was obvious that the burden of his isolation had become unbearable.

Public corruption was the engine for his harangue; but in a thousand oblique ways he revealed that the spark that ignited him was personal, that the corruption of which he spoke had laid waste his own heart

and stalked his family. That Sprague's remarkable public tirade had a private significance was apparent to those few observers who were not overcome with irritation at his bawdy attacks. One reporter wrote: "So incongruous, so queer and yet so suggestive a speech I have never heard delivered in the Senate." Another remarked: "If one were to search the country through for a man who should fill the common ideal of . . . happiness and contentment, there could hardly be found a more striking illustration than a gentleman who with youth has the political honors usually reached only in age; who possesses great wealth . . . who has the key to every circle of society; who can look back upon an honorable record in the day of national trial. The novelist could not invent a situation seemingly so blessed. Yet no one can look into the pages of the [*Congressional*] *Globe* for the last few days without having it put before him that the possessor of all these things is the most wretched of men. Disappointment and discontent show themselves in every paragraph he utters." ³⁵

The press, which had received its share of Sprague's discontent, was almost unanimous in condemning his speeches. ". . . the unquenchable little gentleman from Rhode Island has favored the Senate with a page of Macaulay, a chapter of autobiography, a wail of woe and a dash of defiance," observed one supercilious journal. The New York papers thought his remarks unpardonably egotistical, and most other newspapers shrugged him off as a mountain that had brought forth a mouse. ³⁶

Sprague's warning that the national economy was "a mad horse in full run with broken reins" was drowned out by the sound of gold jangling in full pockets; and by 1873, when the financial crash came, almost everyone would have forgotten his foresight. Sprague's remedy, the United States Council of Finance, was rejected emphatically by leading financial journals. There would be many depressions and many other prophets of doom before the American people would accept government intervention in the capital market; and Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, not William Sprague, would win the argument. ³⁷

While Sprague was ranting about political immorality, Gideon

Welles was writing in his diary: "The country is becoming, though very slowly, aware of the corruptions and abuses which are being practiced. . . . It is the disgrace and wickedness of the times, imputable in part to the evils of the war . . . but encouraged by the Radicals, who have made corruption common. . . ." Eventually Henry Adams would write gloomily: "That Grant should have fallen within six months, into such a morass . . . rendered the outlook . . . frankly opaque, to a young man who had hitched his wagon . . . to the star of reform. . . . The worst scandals of the eighteenth century were relatively harmless by the side of this, which smirched executive, judiciary, banks, corporate systems, professions, and people, all the great active forces of society, in one dirty cesspool of vulgar corruption." ³⁸

In the spring of 1869, William Sprague, Gideon Welles, and Henry Adams saw what most people did not, and even those who shared the Senator's forebodings did not want to be identified with him.³⁹ But Sprague found that he had one source of support—the laboring man, harried by high prices, high taxes, and alien labor. A few days after the Senator's final speech, workmen of Washington assembled at the city hall, organized a torchlight parade, and marched to Sprague's home to serenade him. Sprague replied by heatedly repeating his charges against capitalists. Afterward, as he shook hands with his audience, there was much cheering and talk of Sprague as the next President.⁴⁰

The sight of the millionaire Senator speaking to workingmen from the front porch of his exclusive Washington mansion was too much for one woman reporter, who remarked tartly: "Let the graceful, elegant wife of Senator Sprague be content with a wardrobe that vies in costliness with that of a European princess. Thirty silk walking dresses, all made to fit the same exquisite image, are within hearing of the workingmen's serenade." Kate herself was far removed from the spectacle; but, as one newspaper noted, "Chief Justice Chase stood near the door, a pleased and attentive admirer to the remarks of his promising son-in-law." ⁴¹

The reporter did not gauge the feelings of the Chief Justice accurately. Chase was too anxious about the quarrel between Sprague and

Kate to be very attentive to the Senator's political or economic philosophy. He wrote Kate the next day:⁴²

I was very glad to receive your letter and to note the indications in it of a more tranquil mind than you carried from Washington. You have been sorely tried, my precious child; but much of your trial is as you acknowledge brought upon you and continued by yourself. . . .

Have you written to the Governor as I hope you have and in the best spirit? . . . We have seen very little of each other, only meeting at the table. The Court adjourned today, and I hope to have opportunities of conference with him before the weekend. I have no just expectation of benefit from what I can say, but what I can I will do. You can do more than anyone else. Naturally you say "Must I do all?" It is hard to be loving and affectionate when met by disbelief and unkind acts. I know it is; but I know too that he who thus acts will have his reward. . . .

The Governor's speeches have attracted great attention throughout the country. . . . Undoubtedly he has gained a very prominent position, and if your old mutuality of affection can return you might be happier than ever; for, if I am not mistaken, you have always been ambitious for him. . . . How I wish you could be at his side, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, a real helpmate. . . .

If Kate had read the windy *New York Herald* the day she got her father's letter, she would have known what was happening at her home in Washington.⁴³

SPRAGUE

LITTLE RHODY AT HOME — SKETCH OF HIS SANCTUM IN WASHINGTON
. . . HE SAYS HE IS CRAZY, LIKE ALL GREAT REFORMERS — HE IS NOT
AFTER THE PRESIDENCY, BUT IF HE GOT IT WOULD GIVE OFFICE HUNTERS
"JESSIE"

Washington, April 14, 1869

Senator Sprague being the lion of the hour, if not the coming man of the Nineteenth Century, your correspondent, as in duty bound, paid his respects to him yesterday afternoon at his splendid

residence on the corner of Sixth and E Streets. . . . Going upstairs we passed the grand old form of the Chief Justice, whose presence alone would grace the handsomest palace in the world. He tripped lightly downstairs, wearing that inevitable and charming look of bounteous benevolence that bespeaks one of nature's own noblemen. We found the Senator from Rhode Island in his study, reclining before the fire, wrapped in a loose and well-worn dressing gown, and apparently lost in thought beyond hope of awakening. The study appeared in itself a study, with all kinds of curious traps laying around loose. Books on top of Bohemian vases, wonderfully carved paper knives, odd-looking ink bottles, pen wipers, and a host of other articles of stationery on the mantelpiece. . . . Books and pamphlets everywhere and the New York Herald spread out to throw a flood of light over all. . . . Near the Senator's chair stood a small tray holder, laden with the abstemious fare of a student, consisting of coffee minus milk and toast minus butter.

We took a long look at the Senator's face to see if we could find therein any trace of the malady called craziness, which his enemies conveniently attribute to him. There was none in the eye at least, and the other features are not generally known to offer any sure indication of the complaint in question. Sprague looks old on near acquaintance. He has a small head, small features, large, lustrous eyes, slightly dashed with dimness that necessitates the wearing of glasses. . . . Sprague might have been a fast young man at some period of his life or he might have been a very hard-working student of business; for on the outer edges of his face there are furrows that one of his age should not have. He wears his hair somewhat long and with extreme carelessness as though the comb that nature provides in the fingers had been the only one he ever made use of. It certainly presents a very dishevelled appearance; but it shows at least he is above the small vanity of lavishing on the outside of his head the time that is better bestowed in cultivating the inside.

In the privacy of his study the fighting Senator was even more abusive than he had been in the Senate. Calling Senator Cattell a "mutton head" and Senator Warner a "puke," he said, "All your talk about the

nigger, nigger suffrage, state rights, women's rights, rebels and so forth, is only fit for these old grannies in Congress. Where is our shipping at this moment? Who of those men . . . has ever lifted his voice in favor of the broken-down commerce that was once our pride and glory?" Sprague was making certain that one voice at least would be heard: sixty thousand copies of his speeches were being prepared for distribution.⁴⁴

Carried away by the sensation he was causing, Sprague almost got into a fight with one of his colleagues. When Senator Abbott of North Carolina defended General Burnside without sparing Sprague in his remarks, the Senator from Rhode Island leaped to his feet to call Abbott a "mongrel puppy dog," a creature of the wealthy "mastiffs" who controlled the Senate. The two men made public threats against each other, and the newspapers gleefully awaited a public brawl on the busy streets of Washington. Not much hope was held out for Sprague. Five feet six inches tall, weighing one hundred twenty-three pounds, he was challenging a man with the physique of a blacksmith. After the first day of their feud, the press reported regretfully that "the sun went down without any bloodshed," and shortly afterward one New York newspaper announced:⁴⁵

LET US HAVE PEACE

The creation of the universe, which consumed six days, did not attract half the attention in Washington which the rise, progress, and decline of the Abbott-Sprague feud has awakened. . . .

Politics arouses fleeting hatred and loves, but the passions that marriage endows are less evanescent. Sprague and his wife were still far from a truce; and Chase, trying to bring about a reconciliation, felt a mounting sense of helplessness. Ultimately the problem was out of his hands. Perhaps there was no solution; but if there were, Kate herself would have to find it. How much he knew about the real cause of their separation Kate did not know; but she soon realized that her father, who loved her and understood her better than anyone in the world, did not blame her husband entirely.

"You have both erred greatly; and each ought to do all that is possi-

ble towards reconciliation," Chase told her. "If he won't you must my darling. Humble your pride. Yield even when you know you have the right on your side. Remember the sacred obligations of your marriage vow. Read it over & pray for strength & [attempt] to meet it *fully*, in spirit as well as in act."⁴⁶

"Trust God, have faith in Christ, accuse none but yourself, cherish every wifely sentiment whether now reciprocated or not, have no dispute with your husband, let your conduct be as the day and all will come right. . . . Don't rebel, or let any impatience be suffered in your thoughts. Make all happy around you. Make Willie happy & Nettie, and the domestics. Overcome your raw temper, and be transparently truthful."⁴⁷

Chase was having a hard time finding an opportunity to talk privately with Sprague, who day after day remained closeted in his study with his secretaries. The long delay was making Chase increasingly nervous about the interview. He was a reserved man, and it was with shyness that he thought of the difficult task ahead. When he was dressed in his judicial gown, his cold formal manners were appropriate and impressive, but the Chief Justice did not know how to put off his reserve with his robes. Then, too, in spite of Sprague's preoccupation with his work, Chase was troubled by the thought that his son-in-law was avoiding him. He dreaded obtruding unasked counsels on Sprague, "though I would not hesitate to volunteer if I had any reason to believe that good would come of it. I fear the contrary," he told Kate unhappily. "He does not seem as cordial to me as formerly; but it may be that I am more sensitive to his natural reserve and abruptness."

In his heart Chase knew that there was more to Sprague's attitude. He had failed his son-in-law. Chase had given him his daughter, but he had kept to himself her love, her respect and loyalty. He had not kept them willfully, it was true; but he had known that they were his as they had always been his. And for years after Kate's marriage he had remained in Sprague's home like a secret lover in the guise of a family friend. Perhaps because he recognized his own part in the rupture that threatened his family with scandal, Chase did not blame Sprague. Knowing that one source of the trouble was his reliance on Sprague's

pocketbook, he hastened to repay part of the money he had borrowed for Nettie's education and other expenses, even though there was little left to send Nettie and Kate in Narragansett.⁴⁸

Chase knew that when he went to Sprague with advice, Sprague would accuse him of no wrongdoing. He would accuse Kate. And Chase knew beforehand that it was going to be hard to defend her. She had asked for more tolerance than a husband could give. Chase may have suspected the real truth—that she had been unfaithful; for suddenly he became very sensitive to her conduct. When he heard that she was entertaining a certain Mr. L. at Narragansett and was planning to have him escort her on a short trip, he wrote her frantically: "You cannot be too careful, my child. I have learned more of the hideous propensities of men the last few years than I ever knew before. Only this morning I received a most abominable note from New York . . . full of the most detestable abuse of you & the Governor. . . . I at once destroyed it. For Heaven's sake, for my sake, for your own sake avoid all compromising situations."⁴⁹

The tragedy in his home had altered Chase. It had shattered the small universe that turned upon his ambition, robbed him of certainties and self-righteousness. In his lifetime he had often called upon God, but he was accustomed to speaking to Him in stentorian, commanding tones. Now for the first time Chase's voice was small, frightened, and earnest. He was suffering from heart trouble, and the efforts he was making to avert disaster in his home were costing him years of his life. But he did what he had to do.

Finally he talked to Sprague and wrote Kate afterwards: "I found him under some excitement. He said he . . . could not do anything but it was not misinterpreted by you, and you seemed all the time to be wanting to make a case against him to defend yourself against him. That very morning he said that having missed something for several days, he had gone into your room & found the small trunk & box in which [was] contained your letters from Col. Crosby broken open & the letters taken away. He then spoke of your coming into his room when you thought he was asleep & searching his pockets. This matter you had explained to me, & I tried to make the same

explanation to him but . . . it [was] impossible to get a hearing. He then went on to say that he could not be controlled by you. . . .

"My advice to you is not to criticize your husband's public antics even in your thoughts. . . . He cannot take criticism from you, now particularly. Let him take his own course without any words but cheer & approval. His own judgment will comment which may prove even more."⁵⁰

But Kate did not heed her father's wisdom. She finally wrote Sprague as he had urged; but she gave her gesture a cruel twist by enclosing an impertinent newspaper article in criticism of Sprague's speeches. Sprague was furious, and Kate forwarded his reply to her father, possibly in the hope that he could still be won to her side. Chase did not relent. ". . . make the best of it & not the worst," he advised her.⁵¹

Chase tried to avoid giving advice to Sprague, especially about how their joint home at Sixth and E streets should be managed; but, about a month after Kate went off to Rhode Island, he felt it necessary to admonish Sprague about his choice of servants. He wrote his son-in-law, who was in New York on one of his mysterious business trips: "Mackay [the butler] dismissed Annie yesterday as he said by your order, & has put in her place a very fine looking English woman who appears very well and seems to understand her business. But is it not a little risky to bring such a woman into the house while there are no other women here?"⁵²

All during their long separation Chase stood guard over Kate and Sprague, urging patience and kindness, counseling forgiveness and understanding. Gradually they began to listen to him, and miraculously they seemed to forget their bitterness. Joyously Chase looked forward to visiting his reunited family in the late summer. Kate seemed resigned to the reconciliation with Sprague. While her father was with them, she shielded her feelings behind her remote smile. When he returned to Washington, Chase wrote her: ". . . It was a great delight to see the restoration of the old affection between you and your husband. God grant that it may never be interrupted again. How happy it seemed to make you both." But Kate had spoiled his pleasure. "It was

wrong in you to leave me to be informed by others that you expect to be a mother again in October. I cannot help being very anxious about you; but trust that our Heavenly Father, whose mercies have ever exceeded our *ingratitude*, will give you safety & happiness in your experience. . . ." ⁵³

All during the months that Chase had been trying to bring Kate and Sprague back together again, neither had told him about Kate's pregnancy. Chase realized that he had been working in the dark all along. Everyone else seemed to know of Kate's condition. Why had she not told him? Why had she let him learn from strangers that he was to have another grandchild at the end of October? In his heart Chase must have known the answer.

Bereaved and despairing, Chase moved away from his home at Sixth and E streets. About a month before Kate's child was born, he wrote her of his decision. ". . . Nettie naturally feels that she wants a home of her own, or rather that her father should have a home & that he should be at the head of it. And I think it right to gratify her. You presided over my home some five years and did it admirably. I rather shall like to have her try her hand. . . ."

Wistfully Chase ended his letter: "Naturally the streetcars abridge distance. . . ." ⁵⁴

CHAPTER V

Trials May Come

TOWARD the end of October, 1869, Kate gave birth to her second child, a daughter she named Ethel. Her father sent restrained congratulations and added reflectively, "It is a great thing to have charge of a little mortal, and to know that the character of all its life here below depends so largely on the direction given to the setting out."¹ The thought seemed to sadden him, as though it had cast a shadow on his own memories.

Like her father, Kate chose to share the direction of her children with others. He had waited until Kate was seven before giving her over to the mechanical direction of Miss Haines's school, but from birth Kate's children were surrounded by an expensive staff of nurses and tutors. Her children cared for, Kate was free to return to the amusements of Washington society if she wished. She had spent little time in the capital during the previous year. The Democratic convention had left her apathetic toward everything except building castles on the beach of Narragansett; and, shortly after she had returned to Washington for the opening of Congress, her husband's voice had driven her away. Now that Sprague had exhausted his talents for reform, Kate came back to the city.

There the estrangement from her father bore down upon her. When he moved to the house on the corner of Vermont and I streets, he seemed to move forever out of Kate's reach. She found that he was able to get along without her. Would she be able to get along without him? For the first time in her life she was faced with that question.

Kate looked for her answer in seclusion. Her father was now accompanied by Nettie to social functions; and, faced with a choice of taking the arm of her husband or staying at home, Kate appeared in public

rarely that winter. Her public reason was her domestic duties, and her private reasons she kept private. One columnist announced sadly that the elegant wife of Senator Sprague had "retired before the noon of life to the substantial comforts and enduring peace to be found only in the smooth waters of domestic life."² But the sharp-eyed guardians of the public morals were not fooled, and Kate could not entirely escape curious, sometimes disapproving stares and pity. Her husband's drunken scenes and his wild Senate speeches had made him a social outcast. Nice people thought twice before inviting him to their parties; and politicians, knowing that a fool who shouts is dangerous, distrusted him. Kate hated him. The pretense was over. Their marriage was dead.

Mrs. Lincoln, spending the winter in Europe, was curious regarding Kate's whereabouts. With some satisfaction she wrote a friend in Philadelphia: "I do not see Mrs. Sprague's name among the gay notices of the winter. Is she in Washington—or South?"³ Miss Grundy, the professional busybody of the *New York World*, gave Mrs. Lincoln her answer:

Two or three years ago no sketch of Washington society would have been complete without giving Mrs. Sprague a conspicuous place in the foreground. . . . Of late she has passed very little of her time in Washington, and when here entertained but seldom, having given herself up in great measure to her maternal duties. . . . Much has been said of the beauty of this lady, her grace, her superb dressing; what has been said has been but little exaggerated. . . . All [her] advantages show better as belonging to Mrs. Sprague, arrayed in costly costumes, than they ever did when Miss Kate Chase appeared in very ordinary apparel. The taste in dress of this lady has materially improved in late years. She no longer wears a huge diamond ornament on the top of her bonnet, as she did in the winter of 1865. . . .

Patronizing Miss Grundy went on to praise Kate for being "a careful wife" and exercising "a wholesome influence over the husband of whom she has never appeared proud. . . . Miss Nettie Chase is, perhaps, more universally liked than her more haughty sister," she said

sweetly. "She is not only a young lady to be admired for her stylish appearance and ease of manner, but more for her mental acquisitions. . . ." ⁴

That winter Nettie had delighted her father with a portfolio of original illustrations for Mother Goose rhymes, which were a great success. A few months later, thanks to Jay Cooke, they appeared in book form with the explanation that the drawings had not been "designed for the public eye, but as a birthday gift from a loving daughter to her father. . . . Even his judicial gravity might well be shaken by the exquisite humor of some of the sketches, while connoisseurs admired their grace and spirit, and urged her to allow them to be published." ⁵ Chase was also pleased to see the happiness of his younger daughter over her engagement to William Sprague Hoyt, a dark, handsome young man, Sprague's second cousin, who had accompanied Kate to Europe the summer she met Nettie in Dresden. (Her fiancé had no relation — blood or business — to Harris Hoyt.)

Never before had Chase been more in need of his gentle, sensitive younger daughter; for, along with his worry about Kate, he had an increasing burden of court work weighing on him. During the previous year he had aroused a storm of political controversy when he read the majority opinion in the case of *Texas v. White*, declaring that, contrary to the Radicals' view, secession was illegal and, therefore, that the Southern states had never been out of the Union. A few months later, when Chase and a majority of his colleagues rendered a decision in the case of *ex parte Yerger* that opened the way for judicial review of the Reconstruction Acts of Congress, heretofore avoided by the court, the rage of the Radicals reached a climax. Bills were introduced into Congress to limit the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, and Senate Radicals went so far as to declare that the court should have no power to judge invalid any act of Congress.

By the winter of 1870, conservatives as well as Radicals were attacking the court because of its decision in regard to legal tender. During the war as Secretary of the Treasury Chase had issued greenbacks, government notes serving as legal tender for all debts contracted before and after the act. Lincoln had realized that the legality of the expedi-

ent would eventually be determined by the Supreme Court; and, when considering Taney's successor, he had said, "We wish for a Chief Justice who will sustain what has been done in regard to emancipation and the legal tenders. . . ." Chase, Old Greenbacks himself, seemed predictable on both issues; but when he read the majority decision in the case of *Hepburn v. Griswold*, he once again disappointed Lincoln's expectations. Ignoring strong public pressures for inflation, Chase and a majority of the court determined that the government had no right to make greenbacks legal tender for debts contracted before the act. The court immediately became the center of a storm; and Chase, in the anomalous position of repudiating as Chief Justice the money he had issued as Secretary of the Treasury, had to bear the brunt of its force. "The time [during the war] was not favorable to considerate reflection upon the constitutional limits of Legislative or Executive authority," Chase said in defense of his decision. "If power was assumed from patriotic motives, the assumption found ready justification in patriotic hearts. . . . Not a few who then insisted upon its necessity, or acquiesced in that view, have, since the return of peace, and under the influence of the calmer time, reconsidered their conclusions."

On the day the decision was rendered, Grant appointed two new justices to the court, and in a year a new majority would reverse the decision. But in the spring of 1870, Chase's opinion stood, and a tidal wave of opposition broke over his head. Chase did not take the struggle well. He noticed that he tired easily and was losing weight alarmingly.⁶

Sickened with the quarrels of Washington, his friend Henry Adams took to the woods in the spring and "astonished himself by remarking what a purified charm was lent to the Capitol by the greatest possible distance. . . ." Adams thought himself happier than his friend the Chief Justice; and perhaps Chase agreed, for he decided to take to the woods, too. He and Nettie were not going to Narragansett that spring. Toward the end of June, they went off for a week of fishing and prayers with Jay Cooke at Gibraltar, and then Nettie took her father to the Minnesota wilderness that she loved.⁷

Chase had hoped for a restoration of his health there; but, as he and his daughter started home, he suffered a heart attack, paralyzing his right side. The attack was a mild one, and in a week he felt well enough to be moved to Narragansett.⁸ Fate had brought Kate's father back to her.

Since the summer of the Democratic convention, when he had first mentioned his symptoms, she had thought her father much improved; but he had never become optimistic during the two years in which he had learned to live with the troubling pain near his heart. His daughter and son-in-law had allowed him little serenity, and he had resigned himself to waiting for the attack that he knew was inevitable.⁹

Chase recovered rapidly, and by the end of September he felt well enough to attend a party, where, feeling in good spirits, he ignored his diet and feasted on steak, green corn, and apple pie. Shortly afterward he suffered another stroke. Again he recovered quickly; and after a week, seeing that he was better, Kate gave him some peaches and grapes that Sprague's mother had sent down from Providence. Chase thought he ought to keep on the diet ordered by the doctor, but Kate insisted that the fruit would be good for him. Finally, too weak to argue, he gave in. Immediately he had another attack, and this time he did not regain his strength easily.¹⁰

Terrified, Kate went to New York to consult her father's doctor; and when Nettie had to go to Washington to attend to some household business, Chase was left in the care of William Sprague. Touched by his son-in-law's concern, he wrote Nettie: "The Governor as long as Katie was absent, was very constant in his attendance coming down [from his office in Providence] every night." Once Kate returned, Sprague disappeared, except for punctilious appearances on week ends. "His place is well supplied by Katie," Chase told Nettie. In spite of the care of his children, Chase's illness dragged on and on without improvement, and months after his first attack he was suffering so much pain that he got little sleep. ". . . I don't walk as 'I used to could' by any means," he jested feebly to Hiram Barney.¹¹

Barney consoled him: "You must enjoy yourself gloriously in such a charming place with your daughters and grandchildren, all to your-

self and all the time. At our age we can almost afford to be invalids with such privileges and without price—" It was true that Chase loved Canonchet, built, he thought, "with a rare and exquisite taste." He loved his bedroom there with its familiar armchair and massive black-walnut bedstead and dresser.¹² And he was devoted to his daughters and Kate's children—the baby and Willie, now a mischievous five-year-old. But Barney was mistaken in thinking that Chase enjoyed all those privileges without a price.

Winter storms delayed the boat bringing supplies from Newport and threatened Kate's great lonely house, destitute of summer parties and seasonal friends. After the Christmas holidays, Kate, with no other place to go, took her children to Washington; and Chase and Nettie moved to New York, where they continued to live quietly on Fifth Avenue while Chase underwent medical treatment.¹³

Months of illness had left him frail and wasted. Formerly a proud figure—six feet tall, broad-shouldered, and straight—Chase was now stooped and thin, a white-haired old man who could barely walk. Despairing of any recovery after his third attack in October, he decided to make out his will, telling his executor H. D. Cooke, "I take this precaution, because life is uncertain and I have been admonished pretty seriously of its uncertainty." To straighten out his complicated financial affairs was almost impossible for Chase with his memory seriously impaired by his illness; and he had to leave them largely to others, primarily to the Cookes, whom he owed over forty thousand dollars for stocks and bonds which they had set aside for him. Chase was insistent on only one point—he did not want Nettie's property used to pay his debts. As matters stood, he owed her five thousand dollars, taken from her account to pay his bills.¹⁴

He was heavily in debt that winter because he had at last bought a home of his own. Even before the Spragues began their interminable quarreling, he had wanted to buy some property, but had put off a decision because of Kate's wishes. As life became more and more tempestuous at Sixth and E streets, he had suggested to the Cookes that they might make an investment for him profitable enough so that he could buy a home. A year later, in the autumn of 1869, his friends had done

the next best thing, lending him twenty-two thousand dollars to buy an old house and more than thirty acres in the northern part of Washington near Glenwood Cemetery, where Sprague had camped with his troops before moving into Virginia for the First Battle of Bull Run. The house, which Chase called Edgewood, was more than seventy-five years old and in bad repair, but he loved it. "The prospect of the Capitol and the Potomac beyond and the hills is splendid, nothing can be finer," he said. "If I had ten thousand dollars to spare I really believe I would spend more than half the winter there. It is not too far for a good walk — only three miles to the Capitol — less than an hour's walk either way." But because he had not had ten thousand dollars, the house had remained uninhabitable; and when he decided that he and Nettie could no longer stay at the Sprague mansion, he had been forced to move to a rented house that cost him almost one third of his annual salary.¹⁵

After his attacks, Chase became obsessed with plans for remodeling Edgewood. At times it seemed that he meant to survive by sheer force of will, by planning and building. When a friend offered to make all the plans for modifications of the house as a personal favor, Chase, Nettie, and Kate pored over his drawings and together approved the final plan — a kitchen and servants' quarters in the basement, two parlors, a library and dining room on the first floor, and bedrooms on the second and third floors. The place would be handsome when finished. Entering the gate, carriages would drive past a peach orchard along the shaded circular drive to the house, which stood on a knoll surrounded by ancient trees. Built of brick, laid in the Flemish manner with end and side alternating, the old house was stately and well proportioned. The marshal of the court, R. C. Parsons, who was overseeing the remodeling, pleased Chase with the news that Judge Bradley, who had just purchased the old Douglas house for forty thousand dollars, was envious of Chase when he saw Edgewood, and that both John Sherman and his brother the general had been very enthusiastic after riding through its grounds.¹⁶

Parsons also kept Chase informed on the gossip of the Supreme Court and assured him that he was sorely missed. His absence was

"worse than the play of Hamlet, with Hamlet wanting. In fact it [was] like the play being performed behind the curtain." But mainly they corresponded about Edgewood. Should the new wing include a tower? What kind of front portico was needed? Should the tenant farmer plant apple trees? ¹⁷ Only the future could make the present bearable for Chase.

The renovation of the house was expensive, and Chase had to be thrifty to the point of niggardliness. For over two months he argued with his Washington landlady about the rent she wanted to charge him because he had not given her a month's notice before terminating his lease. The determined lady, a widow, must have thought the attitude of the Chief Justice undignified, even churlish; but the truth was that the amount made a difference to him. All he had in the world was some furniture, an old farm completely mortgaged to the Cookes, stocks and bonds almost totally committed as security for loans, some Ohio property, and his debts. He would have to depend upon the luck of the Cookes to pay his debts; and, Congress having made no provision to retire Supreme Court justices on full salary, he would have to work to live.¹⁸

He was heartened that winter when Congress, aware of the inadequacy of official salaries, began to discuss a pay raise for members of the Supreme Court. At first Chase hoped that his salary of sixty-five hundred dollars would be doubled; but Parsons, keeping him informed about the matter, wrote: "The [Senate] Appropriations Committee of which Gov. Sprague is a member has instructed their committee . . . to report in favor of giving [the] C. J. \$10,500. . . . This is the *outside* that can be done, & if we can carry this sum, it will be best to do so." ¹⁹

With Sprague on the powerful Appropriations Committee, both Parsons and Chase were very optimistic. In mid-February, immediately after the measure came to a vote in the Senate, Chase got a letter from Parsons. "The Salary Bill has passed the Senate—the *C.J.* at \$8,500—Justices at \$8000.

"The Bill failed at \$10,500 & \$10,000 by *one* vote—What particularly grieves the Judges is, that that vote was given by Gov. Sprague—

"Why would he not help us in this emergency? Had he left the Senate or *not* voted, we should have won the day.

"I am really distracted about it." ²⁰

Chase replied guardedly: "I do not know what influenced the vote of Gov. Sprague. I *thought* he was ready to vote for \$12,000 for the Chief Justice and \$10,000 for the Associates. I do not *know*, however, what his opinions were." ²¹ But, as he hobbled along Fifth Avenue for his daily walk and as he rode to and from his doctor's office, the Chief Justice thought of possible explanations of Sprague's motives. Of all the justices he had the most reason for despair about the vote, not so much because of the money itself, although two thousand dollars a year made a great difference to him, but because the emotional bankruptcy of the Sprague-Chase household was once more publicly revealed on the floor of the United States Senate for all of Washington, indeed, all of the country to see. Neither he nor Parsons nor anyone else who gave the vote any reflection could escape the conclusion that Sprague's motives had been personal, not political. Others may have been puzzled about why the Senator should take pains to insult his father-in-law publicly, but probably Chase was not. In the two years since Sprague had made his sensational Senate speeches, the Chief Justice had had time to do much thinking. After Kate's marriage it had been predicted that William Sprague would vote as Papa Chase told him, and for years the Senator had done just that. But when he rejected the part of the quiet, obliging menial, Sprague was compelled to announce his independence whenever he had the opportunity, even at the cost of depriving the Chief Justice of a merited pay raise.

It might be suspected that Senator Sprague enjoyed his gesture. For years his father-in-law had unconsciously appropriated all that was his; as husband, statesman, and host he had had to take second place. After all that Chase had taken from him, two thousand dollars a year was meager reparation. And Sprague had the added satisfaction of knowing that there was no better way to spite his wife than to embarrass her father.

There was no comfort for Chase in any of the interpretations he could give to the actions of his unpredictable son-in-law, and it was

with foreboding that he returned to Washington a few days later for Nettie's wedding. Because Edgewood was not ready for occupancy, he and his younger daughter were to be the guests of the Spragues.²² It would be a trying period for them all.

No one would suffer more acutely than William Sprague, for the Senate was then investigating charges that he had committed treason during the war.²³

After throwing so many stones, Sprague should have expected his glass house to be assailed. The great powers of Rhode Island—the leaders of society who had always looked down upon their Senator and ex-governor as a crude, unlettered, if wealthy young man, and his business rivals who had coveted his political power almost as much as his cotton empire—had banded together to bring about his downfall, smugly confident that after his shocking speeches the Senator from Rhode Island was as unpopular with his constituents as he was with his wife. Retribution was swift. A few days after Sprague's last speech, one of his political friends had been forced to withdraw from an elective race in Rhode Island because of public pressure. "The feeling is strong against the course Mr. Sprague has taken—especially the slanders which he has uttered upon his own constituents," said Senator Anthony, Sprague's colleague from Rhode Island.²⁴

Sprague had stormed back to Rhode Island to recoup his political fortunes by seeking a new political base—the workingman. The men employed in his mills listened sympathetically to their millionaire Senator decry the poor distribution of capital. They forgave his attacks on the Senate, the press, the Supreme Court, even on the First Infantry Regiment of Rhode Island (he had, after all, defended the fighting valor of the mechanics); and they applauded his tirades against monopolists, bankers, and government officials. But the noisy, sweaty enthusiasm did not persuade Sprague that he had an easy road ahead. He had almost five years before he would have to seek re-election, but his political fortunes were to be on trial in every important state election during that time. The highhanded political machine that had put him in office was now determined to drive his friends from every position they

held so that in 1874, with complete control of the state legislature, they could select a Senator more accommodating than William Sprague.

In the midst of that deadly political struggle in Rhode Island, Sprague found himself in serious trouble from an unexpected quarter. After the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson, he had not given much thought to his wartime adventures in cotton trading. A few months after he had paid off his debt to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, that desiccated little man had died, leaving Senator Sprague free to bury his past forever, or so he had thought. But he had misjudged Harris Hoyt. Sprague should have known better than to commit treason in the company of fools.

In the spring of 1865, Hoyt's confession of his part in the Texas Adventure had won him a parole pending the prosecution of the principals, whom he had named; and eventually, when Stanton generously loosened his grip, he had been allowed to slip into oblivion. There he could have remained had he not been a greedy man; but in 1866, puffed up with insolence over his wartime successes, he had filed a claim against the Federal government for an India-rubber boat, confiscated by Union forces in Brownsville, Texas, in 1864, when that city was taken from the Confederates for the second and last time. At the time, Hoyt had tried without success to cover up his real business in Texas with threadbare cries that he was a loyal Union man and therefore entitled to compensation for his property; and, after being released from prison pending the final disposition of the Texas Adventure, he had foolishly pressed his claims. When the War Department dismissed his case because of doubts about his loyalty, Hoyt decided to present as incontrovertible proof of his integrity the letters from William Sprague recommending him to the commander of the Gulf Squadron and the commander of the Department of New Orleans and his letter from John Hay — documents that he had prudently pocketed when released by the army. In 1870 he sent them back to the War Department.²⁵

At that very time Caleb H. Blood, who had been the American consul in Matamoras during the war, was in Washington testifying before a congressional committee about smuggling activities between Mexico and the United States. Asked by a suspicious government official to

make inquiries regarding Harris Hoyt's past, Mr. Blood returned to Matamoras and after an intensive investigation sent to Washington affidavits disclosing the history of Hoyt's rubber boat, along with a summary of his entire war record. Thomas A. Jenckes, a member of Congress from Rhode Island, looked over the papers with considerable interest; for implicated in Harris Hoyt's activities was none other than the Rhode Island Senator William Sprague, once a friend, but now a bitter political enemy.

Anticipating a campaign battle against one of Sprague's friends for his seat in Congress, Jenckes decided to do some investigating on his own. Following Blood's information, he went to the War Department files and found the package of letters submitted by Hoyt in testimony to his loyalty, letters which bore the old file marks of the Judge Advocate of the Department of the East, the Judge Advocate General, and the Office of the Secretary of War. His curiosity aroused by the attention the letters had once received, Jenckes continued his search. Soon afterward he stumbled upon a spectacular discovery — the War Department file on the Texas Adventure.²⁸

A few weeks later Jenckes appeared in Rhode Island to begin his campaign for re-election. Aroused by the slanderous tone of the campaign, for which he blamed Sprague, he let loose his sensational broadside at the end of October. To a political meeting in Providence he announced that he meant to prove "that in the darkest days of the war, William Sprague, formerly Governor and now Senator . . . violated the Articles of War of the United States in holding commerce with the enemy, and aiding them with money and munitions of war." His audience stared at him incredulously. "I know you cannot believe it," Jenckes thundered. "I do not ask you to do it upon my statement. I have in my hand the record evidence of that guilt and I will read it." Picking up a photographic copy of a document from his papers, Jenckes read a letter from the Judge Advocate General to Secretary of War Stanton, tracing out the entire Texas Adventure with painstaking care, emphasizing particularly William Sprague's involvement, attested to by the other participants, and pointing out that there were the two witnesses to the overt act required for conviction for treason.

Jenckes concluded to his stunned audience, ". . . I strip off not only the mask from the features but the armed visor and the coat of mail which he has worn and show you from the records of the War Department of the United States that . . . [Senator Sprague] stands recorded as a traitor." There was a sensation in the hall.²⁷

The Providence newspapers gave Jenckes's melodramatic charges full coverage, but even the editors whom Sprague had singled out for attack in his Senate speeches withheld comment, much as they despised him. Many unpleasant things had been said about William Sprague in the past; but no one, no matter how bitter a political enemy, had ever attacked his war record. Through all his vicissitudes, his proud record as first volunteer had been Sprague's stanchion, and it was the stanchion of the people of his state, whose honor was reflected and enhanced by its heroes. No one was anxious to pull down that proud memory, except Thomas A. Jenckes. Obstinate he went on about his way, telling the people of Rhode Island what they did not want to hear. To those who questioned his evidence, asking why, if the proof were conclusive, William Sprague had not been indicted, he replied by offering the guess that the War Department had been deterred by the three-year statute of limitations on treason convictions. Apparently it did not occur to him that Secretary Stanton may have had other, very private reasons. Gradually the climate of opinion began to change.²⁸

The supply boat, bringing newspapers to Narragansett Pier from Newport, carried the bitter news to Salmon P. Chase, trying to recover from his third stroke. It was a terrible blow. Jenckes's charges about the wartime partnership of Harris Hoyt, William Reynolds, and William Sprague took the suffering Chief Justice back to October, 1862, when as Secretary of the Treasury he had received letters from both Sprague and Reynolds commending Hoyt's project to his attention, letters that were still in his files. Reynolds had been guilty of corruption at least once, in Port Royal, of that Chase was sure. Had he committed a far worse crime? And had William Sprague, his son-in-law who had lived under the same roof with him all those years, had he too been part of the conspiracy? Chase must have known the answer. Could he have

forgotten what Sprague had once written him: "Every bale [of cotton] we can procure helps to keep down the price of cotton and keeps bread in the mouths of our people — far more advantage to us than the equivalent given for it. . . . Our policy is to get out as much cotton as we can, paying as little as possible for it. The cotton is of more value to us than money to the enemy."²⁹

Chase was familiar with the pattern of operations that Jenckes outlined. As a Cabinet member he had sat through many long discussions of the illegal trade through Matamoras and had read many tedious letters from Gideon Welles urging him to look into the matter. After the war his first important task as Chief Justice had been the development of American prize law, defining the nature of blockades and blockade running in a series of about thirty cases that were landmarks in American jurisprudence and international law.³⁰

Jenckes did not connect Chase in any way with Sprague's operations, but Chase could take little comfort in his position; for if Sprague were to be unmasked as a traitor, there would be no immunity from shame for him. He might have to resign; but even if it were to be shown that he had had no knowledge of Sprague's adventure, his daughter would be branded as the wife of a traitor, and his household would be dishonored. Life had held out two prizes to Salmon P. Chase — eminence and the reputation for integrity. Eminence was the keystone; but the framework, the arch itself, was the name of righteousness, a necessity fixed upon him by stern-faced ancestors who had dedicated their lives to the execution of the will of church and state. That he or a member of his family had dishonored that obligation, that his name would stand in history beside that of a traitor, was a black prospect that could kill a man like Chase.

How did Kate bear the news? For the second time within two years she was given a glimpse of the dangerous complexity of the man she had married. Perhaps at last she realized the reason behind his perverse stubbornness during the impeachment trial. Perhaps she shuddered as she thought back upon the delay in installing her father as Chief Justice of the United States. Certainly she wondered what effect Jenckes's charges would have on the political future of her

father. Anyone who could have read her thoughts that fall would not have wondered that she rarely appeared in public, either alone or with her husband.

When Mr. Blood told a congressional committee about vague rumors of the wartime operations of Sprague's firm in Matamoras, the Senator remained silent, confident that the evidence of his guilt was safe in the ashes of documents that could betray no one. At that time he had not known that Hoyt had saved the letters he had written in 1862 to serve as unofficial trade permits, nor had he foreseen that Hoyt would have the audacity to send them to the War Department. Once Jenckes had made public the existence of those letters, Sprague could no longer ignore the rising crescendo of accusations. Writing to the *Providence Daily Journal*, which was giving the charges and countercharges front-page coverage, Sprague revived the moribund Union relief dodge for the last time. He said that during the war Harris Hoyt had called on him with a recommendation from President Lincoln and a plan to furnish relief to the loyal Union men of Texas who had cotton. Hearing that Hoyt had been promised the aid of the government, Sprague said, he wrote two letters of recommendation for him. Having put his business interests in the hands of his cousin Byron Sprague, he had had no further knowledge of the matter, "except that I remembered it as a bad investment" in 1865, when Byron Sprague and Reynolds were arrested. Then, upon request, he had made plain his innocence to General Dix.³¹

Jenckes blasted Sprague's story by pointing out that the Senator admitted that he, to some extent, and his partners, to a greater extent, had engaged in trade with Texas, trade proscribed by the laws establishing the blockade. To explode Sprague's claims that his partners had gone into business with Hoyt with good intentions, he read long extracts from the statements Byron Sprague and Prescott had made to the army after their arrest. William Sprague had thought that he could lay the full burden of responsibility for A. and W. Sprague and Company on his cousin, who had died in 1866; but Jenckes revealed that when arrested, Byron Sprague had told army officials all about his angry departure from the family firm in 1862, adding that at the time, before

the Texas Adventure went into full operation, William Sprague had forced him to sell his interest in the venture.³²

Sprague knew that he could not afford to let his friend lose the congressional election to Jenckes. The press reported that he was planning to spend as much as one hundred thousand dollars to buy up votes; and when Jenckes was defeated, a Providence paper commented: "Nothing so disgraceful, certainly nothing since the time when Sprague was first elected . . . in 1860, has ever occurred in our politics as this election."³³

The election defeat of Jenckes was far from a vindication of Sprague's name; and, concluding that he could not let the public accusations stand against him, he asked the Senate to conduct an investigation of the War Department records relating to his connection with Harris Hoyt and William Reynolds. His colleagues obliged him; and three weeks later, when Congress reconvened after the Christmas holidays, a committee of five Senators was appointed to look into the matter.³⁴

Jenckes was elated. One of his friends told him that, upon hearing about Sprague's resolution, General Day, a member of the military court that had tried Hoyt, commented, "Why, that damned rascal has slipped his head into a noose. I have got all my notes on that trial." Another friend to whom Jenckes sent photographic copies of his evidence wrote: "I have shown the investigation of the War Department . . . to several of Sprague's friends who have been active and loud in proclaiming *his innocence*—'tis a stinger for them—the facts cannot be denied."³⁵

But Sprague knew what he was doing. Secretary of War Belknap conveniently displayed no more than a halfhearted interest in the investigation, taking almost six weeks to forward documents to the Senate committee and neglecting entirely to send those which proved Sprague's involvement. Because of an unfortunate error by the clerk of the committee, Jenckes's invitation to appear before it for testimony was delayed a month; and when he did get it, there were only a few days left in that session of Congress—not enough time to call witnesses to corroborate his testimony.³⁶

Jenckes marveled at the unfortunate circumstances that blocked his way whenever he tried to move against the Senator from Rhode Island, but he persisted doggedly. "There is evidence, I will state here, in the city . . . which to my surprise has not been sent to the Senate," he told the committee. "It has been in the reach of [Secretary of War Belknap] on whom the Senate called for information. It has been brought to his knowledge." Jenckes read that evidence to the committee—the letter from John Hay, the two letters written by Sprague for Harris Hoyt at the beginning of the Texas Adventure, and Sprague's letter to Gideon Welles describing Hoyt's plan in bright, patriotic colors. Jenckes said he considered those letters the most important evidence the committee had to consider, for Sprague's letters substantiated the testimony of the other principals that he was actively involved.

"Why has [Secretary Belknap] not sent them to us?" asked the chairman.

"That is more than I can say," said Jenckes.

"He was directed to send everything," said the Senator.

When asked if there was available any more information, Jenckes answered, "There is certainly one thing which you have not, which is the confidential statement of Hoyt. That is in existence; its content could be proved by three or four witnesses who saw it."³⁷

In the course of his testimony the Congressman patiently reconstructed from the documents the committee had before it the entire Texas Adventure, and to substantiate his story provided a list of twenty witnesses, including several army officers involved in Hoyt's arrest and court-martial and the former masters of three of the ships involved. The Secretary of War, hastily correcting his oversight after Jenckes's testimony, sent the committee the letters fatally linking Sprague with the operation. But the Senate committee, after looking over the evidence, concluded frivolously that there was "*nothing in the papers implicating Senator Sprague*" and asked to be relieved of further responsibility in the matter.³⁸ The Senators excused their modest conclusions by saying that since that session of Congress was to end in one day there was no time to call Jenckes's witnesses, who were scattered throughout the country (many as far away as New York and

Providence). Then, putting out their cigars and gathering up their papers, they strolled into the Senate chamber to attend an all-night debate on the appropriations bill.

Years before, Salmon P. Chase had remarked to a friend, "The law catches the small rogues, the big rascals are too wary to approach the net. I think sometimes our criminals are not in the penitentiaries but in the churches." Or, he might have added in one instance, in the Senate. Sprague had put his head in the noose and got away safely. Undoubtedly he had known all along what the outcome of the Senate investigation would be. Once he had told the Senate with an air of sincere conviction that any government official could be bribed and had mentioned the clerk of a Senate committee as an example with which he was personally acquainted.³⁹ Eventually Secretary of War Belknap would have to resign from Grant's Cabinet because of the discovery that he had accepted a bribe. As for the Senators themselves, Sprague could depend on camaraderie and their reluctance to cast any insecurity upon their own positions by setting up unpleasant precedents.

The Senator from Rhode Island could laugh triumphantly. He was free. After the Senate investigation, who would ever bother to piece the story together again? The War Department file on the Texas Adventure was dead. Now, along with the Confederate records of the case, it would collect dust in the National Archives.

In the sober Lenten quiet of Washington, there were few distractions from the business being disposed of in Congress; and the voices of the Senators investigating the wartime machinations of Senator Sprague rang out loud and clear in spite of the sincere desire of the committee to remain inconspicuous. Then, with all eyes upon him, William Sprague had the audacity to oppose the large and much-needed salary increase for his father-in-law. A few days later, while the Senate was still deliberating Jenckes's charges, Salmon P. Chase, Kate, and William Sprague were brought together in the house at Sixth and E streets, the first time they had been reunited in Washington since Sprague's sensational Senate speeches. Capital society had time to draw its conclusions in leisure and to exchange them over a cup of Lenten tea. The

brunt of the curious stares was borne by Chase, returning to Washington for the first time since his illness. His friends were shocked at his appearance: he looked so wasted and aged that people scarcely recognized him.⁴⁰

Once that session of Congress had ended, Nettie's wedding became the chief topic of conversation. ". . . society is much exercised about its occurring during Lent and precipitating matters as regards Easter bonnets and costumes," twittered one reporter. Nettie's unorthodoxy was excused: Queen Victoria allowed her daughter to be married two days before Nettie's wedding, and Washington society could scarcely be expected to deny itself the privileges of English royalty. Nettie's friends would have forgiven her without the sanctions of the queen; for they knew that Chase's illness had delayed her wedding so long that if she were not married in March, she and Will Hoyt would have to give up their planned honeymoon trip to Europe.⁴¹

The wedding was to take place in the fifty-year-old St. John's Church on Lafayette Square, the traditional worshipping place of Presidents. Small and meagerly lighted, the church was not suitable for a fashionable wedding. Kate would never have chosen it, but Nettie did not mind its inconveniences. St. John's was where she had been baptized and confirmed, where she worshiped and worked in the ladies' charitable organizations, and she selected it for her wedding out of affection.⁴²

The day of the ceremony was beautiful. "Happy is the bride the sun shines on," rejoiced the newspapers, and Kate sighed with relief that her reception would not be spoiled by rain. There was some complacent indignation over the innovation of issuing tickets to a church wedding, but it seemed a necessary procedure for assuring all those invited of a seat. Most of Washington's political and social leaders were there, critically eying each other's taste in spring fashions. John Hay, who was one of the ushers, summed up the general opinion of the bride and groom when he said, "He is a very nice fellow — and no end of cash. She is a very nice girl — and no end of talent." But Nettie had never been renowned for her beauty, and neither her radiant happiness nor her popularity could persuade anyone to describe her as a

beautiful bride. Even at her own wedding she was overshadowed by Kate, wearing a rich green dress with a daring court train of pink silk. Miss Grundy, hating to admit Kate's superiority to Nettie in any respect, had to concede that the "queenly Mrs. Sprague" looked "if possible, more regal and graceful than ever." All eyes were upon her as she stood beside her father behind the wedding party at the altar.⁴³

And all eyes watched Kate at her reception for Nettie afterward. Everybody of importance, including the President, was there; and the guests soon moved out of the crowded house to the colorful pavilions on the lawn, where they could enjoy the first green day of spring with the Marine Band providing a gay background for the buzz of conversation and the pop of champagne bottles. The reception was a magnificent success; the newspapers called it "one of the most beautiful and elegant affairs ever given" in the capital. "Mrs. Sprague's superior tastes and advantages enable her to surpass almost everyone whenever she entertains," said one reporter. "She has the patrician air of one born to royalty and right regally does she dress and act."

Kate alone received the praise; for although Sprague was the host, he was ignored as completely as possible. Society, like a self-possessed cat, closed its eyes to what it did not approve; and after the Senate investigation, William Sprague disappeared from view. The principal Washington newspaper referred to him only once, as Mrs. Sprague's husband, in its long columns about the wedding and reception, and the New York press treated him almost as badly. Few reporters mentioned that the groom was Sprague's second cousin and son of one of his partners in the firm of Sprague, Hoyt, and Company; and no one commented upon the singular fact that the Senator took no part in the wedding as one of the groomsmen and had only a perfunctory part in the reception. People had begun to treat William Sprague as if he were dead.⁴⁴

Reporters foresaw a happy marriage for Nettie and her husband. "Rarely are marriages so suitable in every respect as this one," they said. "Youth, position, and wealth are possessed by both." Similar prophecies had once been made about Kate and Sprague, and reporters had added beauty to their list of assets. Kate and her husband had fallen so

short of fulfilling their happy destiny that Chase may have been anxious about his younger daughter, but his fears soon vanished. It was plain that she and Will had something that had escaped Kate and Sprague. Sprague's letters to his father-in-law had told of an exhausting honeymoon crowded with parties and broken by outbursts of temper from Kate. Nettie and Will were content in joyous isolation, and their letters carried a contagious vitality to Chase, who wanted to see the ancient abiding walls that delighted them. But he had to give up plans for a trip abroad when his doctor ordered him to spend his vacation quietly at a spa. Even though he obeyed, he was stricken with a debilitating fever which left him in a seriously weakened condition.⁴⁵

Kate, who had a houseful of company at Narragansett, took time out to write, reminding her father of her dream, which neither his illness nor his waning passions had altered. While she was at her desk, her curly-haired little girl had run to her cheering, "Hurrah for Sprague, hurrah for Chase," Kate told her father. "You will probably have seen (still I cut it out & send it to you) an article in the N.Y. *Herald*, advocating a mutual friend of ours for the next Presidency — If you meet him in your travels, advise him not to make too many speeches, or attend too many celebrations of one sort or another, but to devote all his energies for a while to getting quite well, that he may yet live a long while to gladden the hearts of his children &," she added firmly, "if need be serve his country."⁴⁶

Her father was serving his country as Chief Justice, but Kate did not refer to that office. Within less than a year conventions would once again meet to select presidential nominees. Kate was stirring old coals.

CHAPTER VI

Death and Transfiguration

DURING most of the summer of 1871, Chase was too ill to take interest in anything except his recovery; but his decline finally slowed and stopped, and, taking heart, he returned to Washington for the autumn session of the Supreme Court. To his satisfaction he found that Edgewood was completely renovated and ready for occupancy. Not since leaving Ohio years before had Chase lived in a house of his own. He knew that he was dying, and he rejoiced that he would live out his remaining months in the peaceful solemnity of an ancient house overlooking the dome of the Capitol and the rolling hills of Maryland. There, on a hill above the city where he had spent the final years of his career, he would make his peace with the world.

He wanted Nettie and Will to visit him, but they had to postpone their trip for over a year. In mid-January, 1872, he got a telegram from Will in New York announcing the birth of their daughter. "Nettie says she looks like you." One day a month later Chase was stopped in the Capitol reception room by a messenger who informed him that Kate had given him another grandchild — a girl named Portia.¹

All that winter Chase wrote nothing to Nettie about the father of Kate's baby, nothing of Sprague's pride in his new daughter, of his work in the Senate, of his accompanying Kate to parties or to Edgewood, or even of his whereabouts. Nettie knew what was in her father's heart when he wrote her: "I am so thankful that you have such a kind & thoughtful husband. You can never love him enough & he seems more like . . . [a] son than . . . merely in-law."²

It was not easy for Chase to remain aloof from William Sprague. Traveling to and from Edgewood became increasingly difficult, and occasionally he had to accept Kate's invitation to remain at the Sprague

mansion overnight when he attended a party or dinner in town. And Chase was finding that actually he could not afford an independent household.³ He may have sighed with envy as he reflected on the prosperity of his former Treasury employees: Jay Cooke had his castle near Philadelphia, and Henry D. Cooke, now governor of the District of Columbia, was living in an immense Georgetown mansion and building another said to be costing him over a million dollars. It was rumored that his household expenses alone amounted to more than twice the salary of the Chief Justice.

Chase did not expect his rich friends to be impatient about his debts, but perhaps he was unaware that the money market was tight. By 1872, Jay Cooke was carrying many indigent politicians on his books, men who were young and had good political prospects; and he felt compelled to be curt with his old friend Chase for letting his debts mount up. Reminding him that his checking account was overdrawn almost fifteen thousand dollars, the financier told Chase coldly, "We do not like to carry overdrawn accts on our Ledgers and therefore request that you give us your note for this amount . . . payable on demand or at such date as may best suit you."⁴

Not everyone was as ready as the Cookes to write the Chief Justice off. When the press carried reports of his recovery, Chase's mail registered the quickened pulse of hope for his presidential chances. Grant's popularity with the rank and file of the party had survived government scandals; but some Republican leaders, opposed to the dismal bondage of the South and repelled by the sight of the party gorging itself on patronage and the pork barrel, seceded to hold their own convention at Cincinnati to pick a candidate who would unite liberal Republicans and the disgruntled Democrats. Everything seemed to point to Chase as their choice. Four years before, he had envisioned just such a coalition as they were now courting, and as Chief Justice he symbolized the order, integrity, and respect for the time-honored processes of government that the reformers longed for. Even the place selected for the convention was auspicious: Chase considered Cincinnati his home town.

The conventions were to follow the peach blossoms; and Kate de-

cided that April was the time to show the country that her father was physically capable of accepting the nomination. To advertise his good health she gave an elaborate party, inviting the most important political leaders in Washington. The affair was conceived to dazzle even so professional a cynic as Miss Grundy, who, once under Kate's spell, was breathy with admiration. "The house and hostess alike appeared faultless," she shrilled rapturously. The long parlor and dining room, forming two great reception rooms at right angles with each other, were iridescent with brilliant candles, gas jets, and costly flowers; and outside in the heady spring night Kate had had erected a pavilion where her guests were to have supper.

All the ornamentation was a foil for Kate herself. "Mrs. Sprague was looking, if possible, more beautiful than ever," wrote the mesmerized Miss Grundy. "Not a trace is seen in her features or expression which would show that she has grown a day older since her marriage. She was dressed magnificently, and yet so perfectly that the dress seemed rather part of herself than outside ornament." Kate did not mean to steal the scene for herself alone that night as she had at Nettie's wedding. She stretched out her hand to her father, and all eyes were on them as they stood together receiving their guests. The purport of the evening was obvious. Among the guests were three possible presidential candidates, but the one who commanded the attention of the press was Chief Justice Chase, "so much his old self that except for a few pounds less flesh he scarcely bears a trace of his long and severe indisposition. The change was miraculous to those who saw him a year ago at his daughter Nettie's wedding," according to Miss Grundy.⁵

Carl Schurz, who for years had watched both Chase and Kate with his discerning blue eyes, was not blinded by the glittering reception. "[Chase's] futile efforts to appear youthfully vigorous and agile were pathetically evident," he remarked afterward. "Gossip had it that the reception was given for the very purpose of convincing the political society of Washington that he was physically as fit to be President as ever."⁶

Another man who was not fooled was Chase himself. It was true, as Hiram Barney suggested, that Chase's supporters were satisfied with

his health "better perhaps than you yourself are."⁷ As he stood beside his beautiful daughter that warm spring night in the house where they had lived and entertained and plotted for one object for almost ten years, Chase must have known that his long campaign was over. This was their last party. He had come knowing Kate's intent; but even though he saw his future more clearly than she, he had not had the heart to decline. It was his last gesture for her, for the dreams that they had once had together; but Chase made it knowing that there could be no return to those bygone days, that the past had created a distance between them that nothing could abridge.

Chase accepted Kate's conniving, but did not go beyond it. For her sake he did not issue an incontestable refusal to be a candidate; but even though his prospects seemed good, he did not welcome the convention with his customary speeches, trips, biographies, and evocative correspondence. If he were nominated, he would accept; but for once in his life he was going to try the novel strategy of doing nothing while *seeming* to do nothing. Perhaps it was he who persuaded Kate to remain away from the convention.

The meeting at Cincinnati was a dissonant menagerie of men who represented almost as many candidates for the Presidency as constituents, their only common denominator being opposition to Grant. The delegates selected an innocent platform and then, as if one act of moderation had done away with their wits, passed over the venerable Chief Justice for the absurd, sensitive, and unthinkable Horace Greeley. Once again Chase found himself shelved for one of his putative supporters. Grant's supporters gloated, knowing that they could distract attention from the jobbery of the Republican Administration by laughing uproariously at Grant's improbable opponent—a comic figure, tall, awkward, his pockets bulging with papers, his colored trousers escaping his garters, a huge cotton umbrella in one hand, the champion of weird and mystic causes like vegetarianism and Fourier communism.⁸

With no other alternative, the Democratic Party accepted the whimsey of the liberal Republicans as preferable to the serious malevolence of Grant's wing of the party. Chase accepted his defeat philosophically, in fact almost with relief. He gave his friend Greeley his endorsement

and, leaving him to the jackals of the press, made plans for a restful summer of travel.

Grant's election was a foregone conclusion, but Greeley's heart was broken by his overwhelming defeat. When he died a few weeks after the election, the nation was momentarily shocked and grieved; but there were too many paths leading away from sorrow for prolonged mourning. In a world extravagantly rich, gay, and wicked, most people could get along without a disquieting figure like Horace Greeley; but Chase could not escape the loss easily. He and Greeley had been old friends, had shared the same aspirations, fought the same battles, and suffered the same disappointments. One by one Chase's friends were dying. He was reminded how old he was and what a short time he had left. But he needed no such reminder. His heart was bothering him again.⁹

During that December of 1872, Robert B. Warden, a former judge of the supreme court of Ohio, came to Washington to tell the Chief Justice that he wanted to undertake a biography of him. Chase did not appear surprised at the suggestion. "If it is to be done at all," he said, "I should prefer to have it done by such a friend as you." A month later, on his sixty-fifth birthday, he received from Warden an outline of the proposed book. The letter was not one to comfort an old man with the literary ability of his biographer. Warden showed that he had an aptitude for long words where shorter ones would have sufficed and that he was a willing victim of his stream of consciousness, sweeping him far beyond his point.

After discussing Plato's *Republic*, Cicero's *De Oratore*, and Mill's *Logic of the Moral Sciences*, he offered for Chase's consideration various translations — English, French, and German — of a verse of the Bible, Ecclesiastes IX:11:

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong . . . but time and chance hap-peneth to them all.

But Warden made it clear that he did not mean to explain away the disappointments of Chase's life with that philosophy. The object of his

biography was indication rather than vindication, he said. ". . . the totality shall be entirely free from aught resembling sycophancy, or the disposition to idealize a real and living man. You shall see, moreover, that if I refuse to glorify you on account of any mere *success* of your past life . . . I know how to prize your merit, while I even solemnly remind you that success can never be a *test* of merit." ¹⁰

"You are right in repeating that success does not argue merit," Chase replied. "*It has pleased Divine Providence to make [me] instrumental in the promotion of two great Reforms, both political — one social, and the other financial.* But I claim no merit in either." ¹¹ Looking down at his letter, Chase knew that he meant what he had written: he could not claim merit because of the battles he had fought and the prizes he had won. By ordinary standards he was a successful man, a New Hampshire country boy who had become Senator, governor, Secretary of the Treasury, Chief Justice, and almost President of the United States; but by his own standards he had failed.

A few years before, he had written a New England relative: "I . . . [am] an old man, and have had a large measure of what the world calls success. . . . But no success nor enjoyment is to be compared to the noble attainments of the Christian faith." ¹² To Chase religion was something more than ritual practiced publicly one day a week. Like his fathers before him, he had a feeling that religion should be the matrix of life, the dominant, if not the only power that moved a man. The Chase family had given the country many ministers, men for whom religion was a profession, men whose business it was to make God's will explicit to the people. Chase had not meant to renounce that way of life when he chose politics for his career. Politics was the implementation of God's will; his cause was to be God's cause. In abolitionism he had found an issue as solemn as the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and he had become a nineteenth-century prophet, exhorting the nation to righteousness and repentance.

Chase's ancestors, who had taken worldly success as a sign that a man was among the elect, would not have criticized one who was ambitious as well as religious. Chase had determined, "I shall ever strive to be first whatever I may be. . . ." But as a young man close

to his childhood, when certain ideals had been impressed upon his mind like a royal seal bearing down upon warm wax, he had been troubled by his longing. So much intense application to himself was required to get where he felt he must, in fact, *ought* to be that he sometimes feared he might lose sight of his reasons. It was difficult to serve God and Chase at the same time.

Boyhood had been short, and manhood lasted a long time. His inner struggle had diminished, and Salmon P. Chase had put on a breast-plate of self-righteousness that no fragile arrow of doubt could penetrate. When anyone stopped him short to question either his cause or its champion, he had been indignant; and in his indignation he had been sincere, completely sincere. Having no talent for ambiguity, he had not seen that his heart was two fragments that did not fit together, and that the more important he became, the larger swelled his piece of his heart and the smaller shrank God's. It had not occurred to him that a religious man is not necessarily a good man.

At last, time jarred Chase from his complacency. Perhaps the process began on his Southern tour, when his horizons broadened beyond New Hampshire and Ohio. Perhaps ambition dictated his moderation before and during the Democratic convention of 1868, but possibly he had begun to wonder by then if complex problems had, after all, simple answers. In the sober quiet of the Supreme Court chamber, Chase had much time to ponder. Then, when the seeds of doubt were planted, a series of events shook his world. Shortly after the disappointment of the convention, a pain at his heart told him that he was dying, and then his family, the pride and comfort of an old man, disintegrated. Sprague made his sensational Senate speeches, Kate left him without telling her father that she was expecting a baby, and Congressman Jenckes charged the Senator with trading with the enemy during the war.

Chase's critics would say, "There never was a man who found it so easy to delude himself." It was true that in the past Chase had always been able to cloak even his most questionable acts with Biblical allusions and high-sounding phrases; but now, with little time left, he found such rationalization difficult. He could no longer hope for the

Presidency; perhaps, seeing the price ambition had exacted from Kate, he no longer wanted it. Gradually his vision cleared, permitting him to see himself without illusions.

What surprised him was the complexity of his nature, the anomalies, the ambiguity. "It does not astonish me that some good men consider me an enigma," he said.¹³ He had been an abolitionist leader who denied he was an abolitionist, a radical who turned conservative, a man who was religious, but not always righteous. He had loved God and worshiped himself, consecrated himself to absolute principles and served expediency. He had always thought of himself as completely white and his enemies as totally black; but in truth he, like the vast majority of mankind, was neither white nor black, but gray. How much of the truth about himself Chase saw, no one can say; but he seemed to realize at last that the two persons — the ambitious, scheming politician and the stanchly upright New Englander — had not lived together in peace in his heart. In their struggle he had lost the wholeness that he prized so highly.

Thinking back upon the failures of his life, Chase realized that far harder to bear than falling short of the Presidency was the realization that in reaching for that prize he had failed to live up to his Biblical standards of righteousness. Turning to his Bible, as he did each night before going to bed, he read and reread his favorite psalm:¹⁴

I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant; for I do not forget Thy commandments.

And over and over he repeated that prayer in his heart.

"I realize painfully how far short I am of my own ideal," he once had written Kate; "but I am not the less desirous that you should succeed when I fail."¹⁵ That hope, too, had been disappointed. Kate was his greatest failure. She had inherited his eccentricity of ambition, but not his conscience. Kate was too perceptive not to have been aware of the conflict in her father. Had she read him right when she resolved his argument by listening only to the dictates of ambition?

What lay ahead for Kate and her husband, Chase could not know; but he had years to grieve over the signs that their marriage was a

disastrous failure. In 1870, shortly after Sprague's speeches, Henry Adams had called Kate Jephthah's daughter. Recalling the Biblical story of the Gileadite who sacrificed his daughter that he might become leader of his people, Washington society adopted Adams's brilliant epigram; and Kate Chase Sprague became known as Jephthah's daughter.¹⁶ And Chase, who may never have heard the clever phrase, regretted that he had ever accepted Kate's offering.

As a young man Chase was fond of quoting, "History is philosophy teaching by example." He had learned much in his life, much that others could learn; and, as he thought over Warden's suggestion that his biography be written, he came to the conclusion that it should be done. It was to be no glossy campaign biography, but rather a public confessional. Warden was the man to write it; for, despite all his faults, he had the kind of plain, stubborn integrity that had long been missing from Chase's life, integrity that he was determined to win back.

Chase turned over all his papers to his biographer, making no attempt to hide anything which gave an unfavorable picture of his management of the Treasury Department or his political machinations against Lincoln, and directed him to open all his mail when he was gone, saying that he had no secrets from Warden any more.¹⁷ He made only one demand—that Warden pay attention to his private life as well as his public career. "It seems to me better and wiser to judge particular acts by the general tenor of life, than the general tenor of life by particular acts," he said. Along with all the public documents and political correspondence, he gave Warden the little notebooks he had filled with moral exhortations when he was a young man, sermons and essays he had copied, records of his youthful dreams of freeing the Negro and of his painstaking efforts to reconcile his ambition and conscience. And finally he gave him a locked diary—the record of his sorrow at the death of Catherine Garniss. Opening its yellowed pages, Warden read: "December 25 [1835]. I rose at my usual hour this morning. One thought filled my mind, one emotion occupied my whole soul: my great, my irreparable loss; my wife, my dear wife, gone, never to return. . . .

"December 26. I rose this morning at my usual hour with the one

engrossing thought in possession of my soul — my loneliness, my utter desolation. . . .

"December 29. . . . Toward evening, I went to the grave-yard. The rain and snow were falling fast and the north-west wind blew chill. It was a melancholy evening, but it harmonized well with my feelings. . . .

"Jan. 2 [1836]. . . . My wife is indeed gone. She can no longer be the object of care and kindness. *But duties remain.* . . ." ¹⁸

Warden recoiled from prying into those intimate recesses of Chase's past. Surely, he concluded, the Chief Justice, who had always shown the public an impersonal face, set with pride, surely he did not want the diary published. But when he mentioned his hesitation, Chase replied gently that as an interested person he could give no advice about the use of his papers, but that in cases of doubt he thought it best to resolve the doubt against suppression. All the contents of the diary were true, he said, and the truth seldom injured any interest.¹⁹

Warden had originally intended to write a biography of Chase's public career, merely chronicling a few events of his private life; but as he broadened the scope of his work at Chase's suggestion, he began to have some insight into Chase's wishes. "*Without the studies I have made of his private life, I would be quite in danger of discerning little in his public life, after 1845, to praise or even to excuse,*" he said when he finished.²⁰ Only in Chase's private life was revealed the infinite variety of his character, the losses that had turned his great capacity for love inward and his high ideals to petty uses, his weaknesses and his strength, his mistakes and triumphs.

That winter Chase lived with the Spragues because of his failing health, but early in the spring both he and Warden moved to Edge-wood. One day, as he was working in the library, Warden heard Chase talking to Senator Sumner about the biography.

"But is Judge Warden a *good* biographer?" he heard Sumner ask. "You want a *good* biographer. Can Judge Warden grasp your life and character? If he can, can he then put on paper his conception, in such form that it shall be attractive to the reading public?"

Chase answered slowly, "I don't know, Mr. Sumner, that Judge

Warden is quite up to your Massachusetts standard; and I don't think I am quite up to it myself. But Judge Warden knows the people of Ohio, and they know him; and I have always considered that the chief interest [in] . . . the work . . . would be taken in Ohio."²¹

As Sumner rode back into town, he had time for melancholy reflection. Ill, lonely, deserted by his wife and his party, the Senator, like many old men, liked to escape the present by reminiscing with old friends; but he was to find that even the past was not enduring. His friends would change, and their memories would change. Chase was not the same. He had been cordial as always, and yet there had been something elusive, a barrier of reserve, in his manner, as if he had been preoccupied with other concerns, but too courteous to excuse himself. Gone was the familiar self-confidence, the decision; and in its place was a modesty, a hesitancy and gentleness foreign and disturbing. Chase was tired, and yet the transformation seemed deeper than fatigue. It almost seemed that his concept of himself, of his place in history, had shrunk along with his body.

Chase was more moody than usual during the spring of 1873; and, as his suffering made it hard for him to meet the strenuous demands of the court, he occasionally fell back into his old habit of arrogance, speaking sharply to his servants and offending his friends. In the past, people had remarked that he was chesty and hard to work with. His enemies had thought him a crustaceous, insolent man, and even his close friends had found him cold and reserved. He had always been aloof, in part because he *was* arrogant, in part because he could not help himself. He lacked warmth just as he lacked color, and in spite of himself he was imperious when he wanted to be kindly and haughty when he meant only to be dignified. Chase had tried to overcome his reserve, but he had been a glacier trying to dissolve itself into a river; and finally, at the end of his life, he had to confess to Warden that his coldness was incorrigible and had done him great harm.²²

The court continued in session through April, that month rendering its decision on the Slaughterhouse Cases, one of the most momentous opinions ever delivered by the Supreme Court. The majority held that the Fourteenth Amendment did not increase the rights of United

States citizens held before its passage, nor did it give the Supreme Court jurisdiction over "the entire domain of civil rights heretofore belonging exclusively to the States." Chase dissented, upholding the prerogatives of the court; but two weeks later on the last day of the term he delivered a majority opinion in the case of *Osborne v. Mobile* favoring states' rights. By then his health had worsened noticeably, and during that last session he gave over direction of the court to one of his colleagues and sat listening motionlessly, his head in his hands.²³

On Saturday, May 3, a few friends gave him a farewell breakfast before he left Washington for his vacation. It was not a gay party. Chase said very little; and his friends, affected by his mood, fell silent. Shortly afterward he and his Negro servant William Joyce, who had been with him for many years, went to New York. After visiting Nettie and Will there, Chase planned to go to Boston for medical treatments; but he did not expect much benefit from them. "The lapse of sixty-five years is hard to cure," he said. After spending a few days with Kate and Sprague at Canonchet, he was going to Colorado to visit an old friend.

On Tuesday morning William Joyce went into Chase's bedroom in Nettie's house in New York, and, drawing open the curtains, let in a flood of light. Turning toward Chase, he saw the Chief Justice make a motion as if he were going to speak. Suddenly he was stricken with a spasm. When the doctor arrived, he found that Chase had had another stroke, this time affecting his left side. He died a few hours later without regaining consciousness. At the end Kate and Sprague were at his side with Nettie and Will.

Thousands of mourners filed past his casket in the Episcopal Church of St. George in New York City; and his funeral, held only a week after he arrived in that city, was crowded with powerful government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, writers, newspapermen — the influential people who had been his close associates — his friends and his enemies. His pallbearers were a measurement of his past, of its distinction and variety and its shortcomings: Gerrit Smith, the abolitionist suspected of being one of John Brown's backers; Generals Irvin McDowell and William T. Sherman, one an abstemious failure,

the other a generous victor; from the Treasury Department of the war came the controversial Hiram Barney, a crooked politician and a loyal friend, and the scrupulous John J. Cisco; Gideon Welles from Lincoln's Cabinet, the incorruptible New Englander who had watched Chase's doings without illusions or malice; Whitelaw Reid, his press agent for the Southern tour; William M. Evarts, the brilliant lawyer who had helped defend Andrew Johnson in the impeachment trial; and Hamilton Fish, Grant's masterly Secretary of State. The marshals included the undeceived Colonel John Hay and that oily sycophant Maunsell B. Field.²⁴ Not all those men had been close friends (a few of them had not even liked him very much); not all of them were friends to be proud of; but all of them — from Maunsell B. Field to Gideon Welles — had been an integral part of Chase's past.

Chase, like John Marshall, had had an exceptional career, during critical times taking part in all three branches of the national government — legislative, executive, and judicial. And, ironically, Chase's last position as Chief Justice, which for years had been so unsatisfactory from his standpoint, was the crowning period of his public life. As a legislator and administrator he had made a distinguished record, but it was marred by many shortcomings — narrow partisanship, blindness to corruption, and occasionally even double-dealing. But, ascending to the Supreme Court at a time when political passions reached fever pitch, Chase held resolutely to principle and, except for maneuvering for the Democratic nomination during and after the impeachment, withstood the temptation to make the Supreme Court the handmaiden of political expediency. Despite the best efforts of the Radicals, he maintained a conservative position, upholding civil liberties and the rights of civil courts, and showed he had the courage of his convictions even when they were unpopular with his friends or, in the case of legal tender, put him in an embarrassing light.

The period of the court over which he presided was one of the most momentous in history, of little less importance in terms of constitutional interpretation than that of John Marshall. In the eighty years before Chase became Chief Justice the court had only declared an act of Congress unconstitutional twice — in the case of *Marbury v. Madi-*

son and in the Dred Scott decision. But during Chase's tenure eight such decisions were rendered. "For many years to come, the decisions of these [last] nine Terms will be referred to by lawyers, legislators, and constitutional students more than any others," a leading journal commented upon Chase's death. "In them, the late Chief Justice will always appear prominent and never far from right. He brought to the Court no store of legal learning, but he brought . . . a just sense of constitutional rights and judicial responsibility . . . firm, liberal, and just. . . ." ²⁵

Early Sunday morning, May 11, a tired, silent group of Chase's friends and family arrived in the capital with the body for the state funeral service. An honor guard of Negroes carried the casket to the Capitol, through its tessellated halls to the Supreme Court chamber, a still, velvet-shrouded room, where the time was always late afternoon.

Over a chair reserved for the Chief Justice was a gilt eagle, perched on a golden rod. On the top of the casket, above the simple floral cross from Nettie, was Kate's offering—a massive crown of white rosebuds. ²⁶

During the official ceremony Kate sat staring at her father's casket, resting on the same catafalque that had once supported Lincoln's remains. ²⁷ Was she thinking back to the spring of 1865 when she stood in the darkened White House behind her father during the long funeral service for the President? Did she remember what she had hoped for then? Now, eight years later, she knew the bitter truth—that her father was to achieve Lincoln's place only in death.

Kate never recovered from the death of her father. After the funeral, a newspaper reporter wrote: "Mrs. Sprague has all which ought to make life desirable—wealth, beauty, grace and accomplishment; yet I doubt not the May morning on which her father was found unconscious . . . has darkened her life forever. . . ." And, added a close friend of Kate and her father, "on the monument to [Chase's] memory we may write a double epitaph." ²⁸

Returning to the Sprague mansion in Washington in the fall of 1873

was an almost unendurable crisis for Kate. As she wandered through the empty house, it echoed of the days when she and her father had lived there together. On the library shelves Kate could see his law books; in the gaping, silent parlor she could hear the crowds of guests arriving for their Wednesday-afternoon reception; in the dining room she could see their table, laid with damask, glowing in the ivory candlelight. She heard her father's voice in the halls and his footstep on the stair. Everywhere she felt his presence, felt it more deeply than if he had been alive.

When friends called to offer their sympathy, Kate did not receive them. She was suffering from malaria, she explained to John Nicolay, and from the "distress of returning to this house so full of memories of my dear father. . . ." ²⁹ Her friends, aware of her unusual attachment to her father, understood and forgave her desire for seclusion. Some may have feared that she would be overcome by sorrow and, turning her back upon the world, give herself up to unnatural grief, but it was not to be so. Kate had clung to her father so tenaciously in his lifetime that death only bound her more closely; but she was not to be allowed to retire from the everyday world. She saw herself charged with one final responsibility—to place his name before the country for the last time, not to a nomination convention, but to history. Determined to secure his everlasting honor and bring shame down upon those who had refused him the nation's highest position, she was obsessed with the idea that there should be written about her father a biography that would make him tower above the giants of his time. In her last public act of reverence she would canonize him. It never occurred to her that in worshiping her father she would destroy him, that deification would kill the man.

Not long after Chase's funeral there were public rumors that Warden's biography was not going to appear because of serious disagreements between him and the surviving relatives of the Chief Justice.³⁰ The relative was Kate, and the disagreements were many. Warden, Kate had discovered, did not approve of her father's conduct toward General McClellan and President Lincoln during the war, nor did he think well of his interminable meddling in military affairs. As

for his fitness to administer a department of the government, Warden concluded: "Never should our hero have been Secretary of the Treasury. . . . He was totally unfit for any save judicial office."³¹ He reasoned that Chase was disqualified by his inability to judge character. "Moral traits he somehow could not well discern. He could see the brain where the heart defied his penetration.

"That was bad for him and for the country while he was financial minister to Lincoln."³²

"How my heart sickens as I make up the long list of knaves and fools in whom the hero of this work confided," he cried as he came upon records of Chase's relationship to Hiram Barney, the Cookes, and other more forthright scoundrels; and he was tempted to conclude: "After all, this man, the hero of this work, was not a real worthy. He was but a pious, patriotic knave!" When he examined events leading up to the Pomeroy circular, he admitted despondently that he grew heartsick and was tempted to conclude that Chase had been embodied perfidy in the matter. When he looked over his judicial record, he decided that Chase might have been a great Chief Justice had he not been "worried out of due devotion to his high and holy office into almost silly presidential candidature." And when he stood back and surveyed Chase's entire career, Warden could not escape the conviction that too much time had been spent in self-justification, and that Chase, more than anyone else, had been misled.³³

It did not matter to Kate that Warden tempered his frequent outbursts of disapproval by holding Chase's offenses up to his whole life and concluding that he deserved indulgence for his faults. She was not reconciled when he said, "Let us pay due attention to the central light of conscientiousness that, not uneclipsed at times, distinguished his life at large."³⁴ To her, Warden's prying was sacrilege.

Kate did not mind Warden's shuffling impartially through her father's public papers as much as she resented his ransacking his private diaries. Her father may never have shown her what was in the little locked diary; but she knew, nonetheless, and she could not bear the thought of seeing his love for Catherine Jane Garniss laid bare before the public. Kate had always resented her father's first wife, for whom

she had been named; and when she was old enough to have her own way about the matter, she quietly and firmly changed her name from Catherine Jane Chase to Kathryne Chase.³⁵ If Catherine Garniss had stood between her and her father during his life, she would remove her now that he was dead, even if it meant going against her father's wishes, even if it meant destroying Robert B. Warden.

A few months after Chase's death a newspaper friendly to Kate, the *New York Herald*, carried a report that Warden's friends were taking "pleasure in informing the world that many things which Mr. Chase said of himself and his family will prove very distasteful to his daughters. Mrs. Senator Sprague is to be mortified by the revelation that Mr. Chase loved his first wife better than Mrs. Sprague's mother. . . ." Warden heatedly denied that his friends were making any such statements and added, "If the daughters of our hero find the revelations of this work distasteful, they must vindicate their taste. My work requires, in that behalf, no vindication." Refusing to let threats dissuade him from carrying out Chase's wishes, he included the controversial diary in his final manuscript and concluded that even though Chase had loved twice after Catherine's death, "there is but one first love, but one first wife. . . . It is not for me to constitute anew the human heart, or to create, for the readers of [my] work, a new world of intellections and affections. We must take our hearts and lives as God has ordered us to take them."³⁶

Kate did not agree. To his dismay Warden learned that immediately after her father's death she had selected another biographer — J. W. Schuckers, who was to do a memorial life of Chase, a panegyric that would suit even her. A month after her father's funeral she wrote Schuckers inviting him to Canonchet, where, she said, she could "sit down at your elbow and discuss many points of your work." Seated at his elbow, Kate would be subject to no discomfort by Schuckers's conclusions. Her only concern was to get her version of her father's life before the public before Warden finished his book. Even though Warden had the bulk of her father's papers and had been at work on them for several months, her chances of success seemed good. Schuckers, a former newspaperman, had been a lifelong friend of her

father's, occasionally had acted as his secretary during and after the war, and had once begun an ambitious biography of him. He had a firsthand knowledge of Chase's official life and, what was more to his advantage, a familiarity with his nearly illegible handwriting.³⁷

Schuckers did his best to get Chase's papers away from his rival. To his indignation Warden discovered that his room at Edgewood had been entered and an important collection of papers stolen. H. D. Cooke did what he could for Kate. As executor of Chase's will, he was able to persuade Warden to put a trunkful of his material in the Washington branch office of Jay Cooke and Company for safekeeping against fire. Shortly afterward, the trunk was broken open and rifled, but Warden was not caught entirely off guard. Suspicious after the incident at Edgewood, he had taken the precaution of removing the best material before he gave over the trunk to the Cookes. ". . . many of the birds [Schuckers] sought had flown," he commented with satisfaction, "and those the very best of the whole aviary."³⁸

Kate, not easily defeated, entered into a vast conspiracy with Chase's friends to withhold material from Warden and discredit his work. The obliging Cookes refused to answer any of the judge's questions about their private financial dealings with the former Secretary of the Treasury. At the same time Jay Cooke graciously complied with Schuckers's request for the letters Chase had written him. "[I] will forward them so that you & Mrs. Sprague can select from them such as you think best to publish," he said, adding firmly, ". . . I hope . . . that you will make a record of the events as they occurred so plainly & pleasantly that the public will get a better understanding of the connection that existed between us during those fearful days. . . . The wicked slanderers which attempted to tarnish his name & fame & mine also are now happily passed away & probably forgotten."³⁹

At least Cooke hoped they were dead and forgotten. Schuckers's financial difficulties seemed to offer the designing old Pharisee an opportunity to make certain that one historian at least would take a plain and pleasant view of the Chase-Cooke connection. He concluded benignly, "In regard to your own indebtedness, do not bother yourself. If ever able to pay without disturbing yourself, all right; otherwise let

it remain.”⁴⁰ Schuckers seemed to have inherited Chase’s inability to make money, but if he could inherit his obliging friends as well, he was saved. His book would contain nothing but praise for the Cookes; and all debts and credits would be balanced out.

In an attempt to compensate for the material Warden had, Schuckers wrote to other of Chase’s friends for their letters, but he found many people evasive. Gerrit Smith answered, “I do not feel at liberty to let any other persons than Mrs. Sprague & Mrs. Hoyt have their father’s letters to me. . . . It is for them to decide what use shall be made of them.” He sent Kate sixty-four letters, cautioning her, “I beg you exercise your soundest judgment in allowing extracts from these confidential letters to be printed.” Kate read them carefully and decided that only ten could be passed on to Schuckers. The rest disappeared. What they contained, what light they cast on Chase’s friendship with the mysterious, unstable abolitionist, whether or not they linked him with John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, no one would ever know. They merely became part of a larger mystery — the question of what happened to all the pages torn from Chase’s letterbooks and the letters that should have been in his files of incoming correspondence, the letters Kate had written him when she left her husband because of his sensational Senate speeches, all the letters he had written her in the last two years of his life. Perhaps Chase himself destroyed some of them. Perhaps Kate did. She was determined that only records flattering to her father would remain for the historians who were to follow Schuckers, but not even Kate could completely undo the past.⁴¹

The race between the two biographers seemed about even until mid-summer, when, in spite of the generosity of the Cookes, Schuckers’s business difficulties began to interfere seriously with his work. By January, 1874, six months later, it was clear that Warden was pulling ahead. Frantically Kate tried to stop him with legal action. Years later her attorney admitted “an attempt, which never came to light, to kill Judge Warden’s grotesque biography of S. P. Chase. . . .” Kate finally told Schuckers, “. . . it is doubtful if through litigation we can gain our point, viz, the suppression of Judge Warden’s book. They [her legal advisers] are now working to induce Judge W. to have his work prop-

erly revised . . . & furthermore, to *delay its issue as long as possible.*"⁴²

When her lawyers failed, Kate turned to the *New York Herald* to discredit the forthcoming biography before it was delivered to the nation's bookstores. The *Herald* obligingly called Warden a chucklehead and accused him of having taken advantage of Chase's enfeebled intellect during his last illness to get permission to write his biography, a privilege rightfully belonging to Schuckers. "Judge Warden mistakes a liberal use of the dictionary for the splendors of diction," said the article cuttingly, "and he prefers the sunflowers to the flowers of rhetoric. He can neither paint a portrait with distinctness of outline, nor state a fact with clearness of expression."⁴³

There was some truth in the *Herald's* unkind metaphor. Warden's biography, *The Private Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase*, which appeared about a year after Chase's death, had many shortcomings. Warden was a dull fellow and, unfortunately, a long-winded one with a love for irrelevance, particularly if phrased in Latin or Greek. In the course of his remarks — his book was well over eight hundred pages long — he did not spare his readers his opinions on religion, languages, etiquette, medicine, geography, his minister, Plato, Benjamin Franklin, Montesquieu, Shakespeare, or, in fact, anything or anybody that caught his roving eye. He included a generous survey of his own career, offering in full some of his political speeches, and outlined in painful detail his differences with Kate and her friends. He did little more than make a compilation of the material Chase had given him, so that his book proceeded jerkily from recorded incident to recorded incident, as if it were a series of still pictures pasted in a photograph album.

And yet, despite his shortcomings, he wrote a good book; for from that mountain of detail emerged a man, a man with faults and feelings as well as virtues. Warden served history by laboriously translating Chase's handwriting and printing almost everything he had access to, whether flattering or not, thereby preserving parts of Chase's life — his youth, his early days in Ohio, his love for Catherine Garniss, much of his political correspondence — which might have been lost had he been less persevering or less honest. And the result was, as Warden himself

said, that "this work at large, imperfect as it is, appears to its composer to have represented Salmon Portland Chase, with his imperfections and his virtues, with his greatness and his weakness, with the sins he committed and the good deeds he performed, just as they were; and so it leaves him to the proper judgment of these times and of the times to come." ⁴⁴

Schuckers's book, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase*, which was published shortly after Warden's, was quite different, containing as little as possible about Chase's private life and a highly selective treatment of his public career. The diaries, letters, and records that were in Schuckers's possession were not printed in full, for he agreed with the reporter of the *New York Herald* that "Mr. Chase was a very remarkable man . . . not to be too closely scrutinized but to be dealt with lovingly and sympathetically." He agreed also that "what would have been a sin in other men was not a grievous fault in Mr. Chase." But Schuckers decided that the less said of his hero's faults, the better. The result was that there was little substance in his biographical meringue. His sticky sanctification of Chase was summed up in one long reverential sentence: " . . . he hated all things mean, false, or unchaste . . . he was blameless, just, truthful, generous, fearless for right, and humane; honoring God and loving his fellow men." ⁴⁵

That was the image Kate wanted to impress upon the public mind, but once again she failed. Her ambition for her father's posthumous reputation only served to magnify his shortcomings. A year after his book was published, Warden felt compelled to issue a pamphlet entitled *An Appeal by the Author of the Best Abused Book of the Period*, but he need not have been so aggrieved. Kate's attempts to suppress and discredit his work only heightened interest in it and focused the curiosity of the public on Chase's much disputed private life. ⁴⁶

That curiosity could not be satisfied by Warden's book, thorough as it was; for it contained little about Kate except her attempts to destroy his work. No story of Chase's life could be complete without her. Kate *was* his private life for many years after the death of Catherine Garrison. It was she who spurred his flagging ambitions, she who urged him to plot and scheme and compromise, and it was she who caused his great-

est sorrow. Nor could Chase be understood without considering his son-in-law Senator William Sprague. After 1863 the three of them — Chase, Kate, and Sprague — had been irretrievably bound together, much as they might have wished it otherwise.

CHAPTER VII

The Prince of New York

IN SEPTEMBER, 1873, four months after Chase's death, a disaster befell the country. On the day it occurred, Jay Cooke and President Grant had breakfast together at Cooke's mansion near Philadelphia. The financier became uneasy at the news coming over his private wire from the stock exchange; and, after the President had smoked his last cigar and gone about his business, Cooke hurried downtown to his office. But he was too late: his New York office had been forced to close down. Jay Cooke wept, knowing that his Philadelphia and Washington offices would come thundering down after it.

With Cooke's failure pandemonium broke loose. For years businessmen, drunk with success, had been overtrading, expanding credits, and speculating recklessly on a market they thought indestructible; and suddenly, like tipsy acrobats leaning too far forward, they tottered and fell with a crash. The damage went deep. Unlike some depressions, it struck down the rich and the poor. Millions walked the streets, factories closed, and mortgages were foreclosed. Recovery was a long way off.¹

Sprague had predicted the disaster back in 1869, but his foresight did not enable him to save himself. A month after Cooke failed, Sprague, Hoyt, and Company of New York, the firm for which Nettie's husband worked, closed its doors; and creditors, examining the books of A. and W. Sprague and Company, discovered that the liabilities of that firm amounted to a sum greater than the combined municipal and state debts of Rhode Island. Sprague's entire gaudy financial structure, stretching from Maine to Texas, encompassing cotton mills, banks, factories, railroads, steamship companies, and real estate — the vast em-

pire that had sprung from a small New England gristmill — collapsed like a house of cards. The effect was devastating. Banks closed down, businesses failed, land values plummeted, and thousands were thrown out of work.

Sprague's dunning creditors packed a public hall in Providence; and because of their clamor, all his property, including Kate's castellated mansion in Narragansett, was conveyed to trustees, who issued promissory notes amounting to fourteen million dollars. With assets estimated at over twenty million dollars, Sprague was not in a hopeless situation; but he was forced to go to work for the trustees on a salary.²

The press blamed his downfall on his foolish pretensions and the incompetent sycophants he kept around him. "It is doubtful if [Sprague's associates] long continued to dazzle the eyes of his wife, for Kate Chase has too keen an intellect . . . to be long deceived," said one newspaper scornfully. Sprague blamed his failure on the refusal of banks to extend him credit. When he got into trouble, bankers, recalling his violent Senate attacks on the nation's moneylenders, argued that the Senator's views on finance were radical and unsound and that his financial difficulties were chronic; and, having relieved their injured feelings, they smugly turned their backs on him.³

Sprague took his failure hard. He had always taken more pride in his business success than in his political position. The Senate was an anticlimax after his stormy days as a heroic war governor of Rhode Island, prancing about the streets of the capital with his splendid troops at his heels. As a legislator he was nothing more than a small man with a drooping mustache who rarely opened his mouth except to yawn. When he finally broke his bored silence to make his explosive speeches, he put an end to his political career; but Sprague no longer dreaded the prospect of facing the aroused Rhode Island state legislature. Long before Chase's death he had ceased caring about his position as an excuse to maintain his wife in style in Washington so that she could hover watchfully over her father, and he cared little about it for himself. His pride was business. In the Senate he was treated with condescension, but in business no one had dared dismiss him lightly. Thousands depended on him for their dinners: mills, factories, trans-

portation networks moved at his command. In business he was a general. Success there had made many other failures endurable.

Sprague always met defeat more lustily than he took success. His fierce performance in the Senate had shown him to be erratic and impulsive, a dangerous man when on the defensive. Now, faced with complete financial ruin that would rob him of his last rag of self-respect, he became desperate — and incalculable.

Kate was only indifferent. The Boy Senator was of no consequence to her any more. While his world collapsed, she gave birth to her fourth child, a daughter named Kitty. While his creditors pored over his books, she fought with Robert B. Warden about the biography of her father. While his assets were being liquidated, she suffered her fathomless private grief. Kate had inherited Edgewood from her father's estate; and early in the spring after his death, when the dogwood bloomed and the hills turned from burnt sienna to flaxen green, she and Sprague moved out there to live until Congress adjourned. At Edgewood her irreparable loss bore down upon her. When John Nicolay, marshal of the Supreme Court, wrote her about moving the marble bust of her father to the courtroom, she was panicstricken at the thought of giving it up. "My Father's Bust is so much of a household god to me, that I always dread its being moved lest something should harm it," she told him.⁴

She was emotionally adrift. All her devotion, all her passion she had given her father; and she was lost when suddenly, with a finality she could not escape, he was gone. Kate clung to illusions and memories for a while, but the biography fight was the last battle she could fight for him. When it was over, she was through. Never would she be released from that strange, disquieting kinship with her father; but, now that he was dead, she had to make a new life for herself. She was too obstinately alive to succumb to sorrow.

She continued to live with Sprague, going with him to Canonchet when Congress adjourned and returning to Washington when the Senate was in session; but he no longer had any part in her life. Between them stood failure at two nomination conventions, the impeachment, the Senate speeches, charges of treason. And now, stripped of his

money and power, Sprague had nothing to offer her in the future. He could not fill the void in her heart. Kate would have thought it a perversion to give him any of the devotion she had lavished on her father.

In Europe Kate had learned that there was an easy solution to the marriage of convenience which paid off in money or prominence or children. Europe was a knowing old jade who had much to teach a beautiful young woman from Ohio who had learned culture in New York and sophistication in Washington. The people Kate met on the continent, the rich, influential, cosmopolitan crowds in Brussels, Paris, and Venice, had made an agreeable entente with fortune. Accepting Henry Adams's dictum that "the capacity of women to make unsuitable marriages must be considered as the corner-stone of society,"⁵ they made the best of their lot. Once they had done their duty to society, they took what they wanted for themselves. Adultery was a very nasty word for a very pleasant accommodation.

Kate had not been able to make use of the lesson until her father died. She may have had a few affairs, her daughters may not have been Sprague's children; but she had not been free to fall in love. As long as her father was alive, he had pervaded her consciousness and imprisoned her feelings; but after his death Kate found that she had to have another household god to take his place, that she could not live without one. Her children and the stale pleasures of the nursery were not sufficient. Her home had impenetrable walls; and Kate had to live her life in the public eye, had to be talked about, envied, admired. And she had to idolize someone. As she began to take more and more interest in Roscoe Conkling, the dazzling Senator from New York, her desolate grief over the loss of her father was eased.

Kate had known Conkling for many years. He had been a Senator since 1867, only four years less than her husband, and had previously served in the House. A friend of her father's, he had frequently attended parties at the Sprague mansion in Washington. Usually Conkling had come without his wife, the attractive sister of the New York Democrat Horatio Seymour. If she had wanted to, Mrs. Conkling could

have taken her place as one of the leaders of capital society, but to its surprise Washington learned that she preferred her garden in Utica to endless parties, balls, and grand receptions. The truth was that she cared little for society and even less for her husband. Perhaps Senator Sumner unwittingly hit upon the reason when he exclaimed one evening, "Do you know that she is one of the few women who can talk sense?" There were others who said that her absence was due to her husband's roving eye.⁶

Few women were as unappreciative of Conkling's manly charms as his wife. The Senator was a gorgeous fellow—a tall, powerful, sartorial triumph of blended color. Women grew giddy over his turndown collars and delicately tinted waistcoats, his bright red or blue butterfly-bow ties and fawn-colored trousers. In their eyes Conkling had many virtues: he dabbled in the women's suffrage movement and never used liquor or tobacco; he liked boxing, a sport that gave him an opportunity to display his well-developed shoulders. (Even his enemies conceded acidly that the Senator had the finest torso in public life.) Above all, he had a flashing eye, a flaming red beard, and a rich, sonorous baritone voice.

"Senator Conkling is the Apollo of the Senate," wrote Olivia, one of the infatuated women of the press. "His beauty is the aqua-marine type. It resembles a very fine diamond considerably off color, unless one is fond of flame." Women were, as Conkling well knew. When maiden ladies sent long-stemmed pink roses to him on the floor of the Senate, he acknowledged the gift with a slight nod of the head. He was used to adulation; in a sense it was his profession.⁷

It was said that the Senator had one vice, but it was not thought to be entirely unattractive. There were always stories abroad linking his name with this woman or that, and it was said that a child in New York bore a shocking resemblance to him. His admirers, thinking him too handsome to be pure, suffered little nervous thrills at the thought of his wickedness. The Senator strutted around the capital with an air of complacency and said nothing. The whispered rumors enhanced his reputation; the reputations of the women involved were their own affairs.⁸

When Chase died, it was rumored that Roscoe Conkling was to be his successor; and shortly afterward President Grant offered him the Chief Justiceship. To most men the position would have been a golden pinnacle of achievement, but not to Roscoe Conkling. Refusing to let the artless President Grant inflict the same fate on his friend that Lincoln had reserved for his enemy, the Senator replied that he could not accept, that unfortunately he did not have the temperament of a judge. He also lacked the legal background; but, always willing to cope with matters he did not understand, Conkling was not swayed by that deficiency. The truth was that the judicial life, its seclusion and somber tones, did not appeal to him. He was impatient of logic and precedent; the impartiality of the law threatened his individuality. Chase had allowed himself to be bought off because he was an old man in need of security, but Conkling was young, only forty-three. He was not willing to trade the seductive uncertainties of politics for law. He thrived on the jungle warfare of New York politics and grew sleek and self-assured in the merciless scramble for power in the Senate.

Some people applauded the Senator's bold decision because they thought him an ornament in Congress. Others applauded just as loudly with relief that the Supreme Court would not be subjected to his meanness. Through the perfumed tailoring and booming rhetoric, this cynical minority saw something uncivilized about the Senator. He was not out to purify society or the government; he was a spoilsman, interested in nothing more than the kingdom, the power, and the glory of being a Senator. While great social and political upheavals convulsed the country, while change struck at custom like a blind fury, Roscoe Conkling, unperturbed, combed his beard and looked after his patronage. Perhaps Henry Adams had him in mind when he said, ". . . democracy, rightly understood, is the government of the people, by the people, for the benefit of Senators. . . ." ⁹

Conkling was not the usual kind of party boss, for unlike most politicians he made no pretense of being affable. By the magic of thunderous oratory and flame-colored beauty, he charmed his admirers into thinking him a good fellow; but they never saw him kiss a baby or take off his cutaway coat at a picnic. A nervous, arrogant, angry man,

he "was an island of ill nature in a monotonous expanse of professional amiability." Priding himself on his exclusiveness, he never relaxed his airs even with his colleagues. He could not stand to have one of them so much as put a foot on the rung of his chair. It was undoubtedly true, as Garfield said, that he was more interested in followers than friends, and he got along poorly with people who were not followers. Someone once remarked, "Conkling seemed to consider all men who differed with him as enemies of the human race." Chase had felt that way, too; but, rationalizing his battles as struggles for principle, he had always assumed a fighting mood of righteous indignation. Conkling boasted of no such subterfuge: he kept his quarrels bitter, deadly, and strictly personal.¹⁰

Vanity was the resource that made his frenetic, querulous life tolerable. A crusader like Salmon P. Chase was able to hide his egotism to some extent under a bushel of high-sounding principles, but no such camouflage concealed Conkling's self-esteem. It was "Shakespearian and *bouffe*," conspicuous even in the pompous, self-admiring company of Senators. James Blaine laughed at his "haughty disdain, his grandiloquent swell, his majestic, super-eminent, overpowering, turkey-gobbler strut. . . ." ¹¹ The description stuck. When Conkling stood on the Senate floor in his carefully rehearsed pose — his handsome figure erect, his head thrown back, his left thumb hooked into his side trouser pocket and his right foot slightly advanced, his wavy hair glinting like highly polished maple, and his beard exquisitely curled — people would recall "turkey-gobbler strut" and smile.

He remained one of the most powerful men in the country. Who could tell, some day he might even be President.

This, then, was the man Kate chose as her father's successor — Roscoe Conkling, handsome, overbearing, theatrical — a man of magnificent meanness, animated by irritation, as fiery and strong-willed as Kate herself. Perhaps he was a dangerous man to love. Self-centered and ambitious, he did not form strong attachments to others; and there clung to him always, even in his love affairs, a faint suggestion of expediency, much as the odor of fish clings to the fisherman even as he sits in church.

In March, 1875, Kate's husband finished out his second term in the Senate, collected his papers from his office, packed his things, and returned to Rhode Island and his financial troubles. He was not planning to return to Washington. After impatiently bearing its grudge for many years, the Rhode Island legislature had revenged itself on its abusive Senator by electing in his place his archenemy Ambrose E. Burnside.¹²

Dismantling her father's house, Kate went back with Sprague to Narragansett;¹³ but she soon found life there intolerable. Her husband would leave Canonchet abruptly without a word and, after a time, would reappear, giving no explanation of his absence. For hours he would stare moodily into space without eating or drinking, and then he would get roaring drunk. Sprague knew of the stories about Kate and Conkling, and he bitterly resented the Senator who was intruding on his unhappy home. Although he no longer had the floor of the Senate to voice his rage, it was loud and public; and it was heard the length and breadth of Rhode Island. He called Kate vile names, accused her of adultery, and told his children that he was not their father. One night in a blind drunken fury he smashed furniture and, dragging the wreckage outside, built a huge bonfire.¹⁴

Kate had been only contemptuous when she had heard of her husband's many affairs with prostitutes, but she was furious when he began driving away their household maids with his persistent attentions. Her rage and mortification reached a climax when a little booklet called *The Merchant's Wife* was published by the author in 1876. The book was written by Mary Eliza Viall Andersen, who had fallen in love with William Sprague in the days when he was the handsome young colonel of the Rhode Island Marine Artillery. Her family had been horrified to learn that she was going to have a child and that William Sprague, its father, had no intention of marrying her. When Sprague had abruptly left for Europe, the unfortunate girl's family had hastily arranged a marriage for her with an army officer, but he had deserted her immediately after the birth of her son. Her life afterward had been a nightmare of lonely drunkenness. Shunned by her old friends and ignored by her lover, she had watched Sprague's career

from the side lines, always with the same wide-eyed, childlike admiration. Finally, in 1876, when his life seemed as hopelessly ruined as her own, she wrote her memoirs, thinly disguised as a short novel. William Sprague was the merchant; Kate became Avis, his wife; Chase was the statesman; and Mary Eliza Andersen called herself Miriam.

Describing Sprague's departure for Washington after the firing on Fort Sumter, Miriam wheezed rapturously, ". . . not a man, woman or child, in all that vast crowd assembled along the line of march, who did not gaze with wonder and admiration upon the handsome cavalier, the magnificent patriot, the noble young man going forth from their midst to fight for them — for Liberty and God. Long live the King!" In a frenzy of alcoholic exaltation, she cried, "I like to think of those days . . . when careful students of men and history thought to discover . . . a resemblance between our hero and Napoleon. There was the same eccentricity of manner and of dress; that belief in destiny; that antagonism for the lawyers; a custom, so to speak, of cloaking himself and his movements in a vein of mystery. . . ." About Sprague's falling in love with Kate she sighed, "Alas! for that most dire infatuation which blinded him to the flaming net into which the statesman and his daughter were softly and deftly drawing him."¹⁵

Kate could imagine the amused derision of the first families of Rhode Island when they read that gin-soaked tribute to her husband. The whole incident seemed horrible and unreal, as if she were having a bad dream. Unfortunately it was no dream; and unhappy Kate, facing the stares of the curious public, had to bury her anger and humiliation under a mask of indifference. But in private she stormed at her husband. When she berated him, he threatened to kill her. Finally, one night in February, 1877, he became temporarily deranged and, breaking into Kate's bedroom, tried to push her out of a window.¹⁶ That was the end. Kate packed her trunks, bundled up her frightened children, and returned to Washington.

She found the capital in an uproar as one of the most spectacular controversies the country had ever witnessed was reaching a climax. The issue was the disputed presidential election of 1876. The principals in the controversy were Rutherford B. Hayes, a Republican dark horse,

and the Democrat Samuel J. Tilden. The outcome, many people said, was in the hands of Roscoe Conkling.

Grant's second administration had staggered to a dismal conclusion, discredited by scandals and the endless depression; and at the polls the Democrats had reaped the benefit of national indignation. On the night of the presidential election, New York newspapers conceded the victory of the Democrats, and the Republican national chairman went to bed in disgust. But sophisticated politicians were not to be put down easily: conflicting sets of electoral votes arrived in Washington from Oregon, South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana. Fraud! cried the Democrats, as the Republicans tried to stifle their glee. If by some stroke of political genius those four states were to be counted for Hayes, he, not Tilden, would have the election. The country was thrown into the most turbulent debate since the impeachment of Andrew Johnson. The Republicans, controlling the Senate and the Vice-President, insisted that the Vice-President had the right to decide which set of votes he would honor. The Democrats insisted that the Vice-President was required to turn the question over to the House, which was Democratic. No solution was offered by the Constitution. Hayes and Tilden remained cool, but the rest of the country argued, shook its fists, and threatened bloodshed.

Bewildered by the confusion, a far cry from the manageable disorder of an army, President Grant called upon his trusty man Roscoe Conkling to work out a solution. Conkling agreed to do his best, and after much wrangling a joint committee of Congress submitted a plan. Disputed votes were to be handed over to a special electoral commission, whose decision was to be final unless overruled by both houses of Congress, a remote possibility with each house controlled by a different party. In a dramatic speech Conkling pushed for the Senate's adoption of the plan, and dramatically he collapsed afterward, ill and overworked. The bill passed, and the commission was set up along party lines with seven Democrats and eight Republicans.

On the surface it seemed that Conkling was playing his loyal part for the Republicans and Grant, but actually his conduct was causing

great anxiety to his friends. Hayes had been selected by the Republicans as a compromise candidate to placate both wings of the party—the Stalwarts, followers of Grant and Conkling, and the Half-Breeds, friends of Conkling's enemy James Blaine, who had made the flamboyant Senator from New York the victim of some of his most memorable imagery. But there was no compromising with Roscoe Conkling. Hayes stood for reform of the civil service, and the great spoilsman saw a threat to his kingdom in New York. During the campaign he had excused himself from electioneering by pleading eyestrain and had withdrawn majestically to a darkened room to await the outcome. Hayes had been urged to flush the Senator out of hiding by offering him the post of Secretary of State, but he had remained noncommittal. After the returns were in, suspicions developed that Conkling had something up his sleeve. Tilden got a jubilant letter from one of his supporters reporting that Conkling advised the Democrats against the "good-boy principle of submission. . . . I am happy to inform you he is sound as a bullet all through." Hayes was warned that Conkling was working against him, and the press carried rumors that the Senator was going to make a deal with the Democrats that would put Tilden in the White House.¹⁷

As the controversy neared its conclusion, Kate quietly took a seat in the Senate gallery and listened with rapt attention to the excited debate taking place on the floor. This was not a matter in which she could remain neutral: Tilden was the Democrat she blamed for depriving her father of the party nomination in 1868.

If the Democrats were to win any of the four disputed states, the election would be theirs; and they were confident that Louisiana would go to them. Party leaders repeated Conkling's boast that he was going "to arrest the highhanded dealings of the Republicans," and word spread that the Senator had talked eight or nine of his Republican colleagues into voting against the electoral commission in the case of Louisiana. The Democratic House could be counted on to go along, and the election would be thrown to Tilden. The night before the final decision on that state, Democrats went to bed assured that victory was

theirs. The rumor sped through the capital, and the next day the galleries were filled with expectant crowds. Kate was not in her usual place, but no one seemed to notice her absence. Everyone waited for the handsome Senator from New York to stride onto the floor. He did not appear. Without their leader, Conkling's Republican friends wavered and melted away from the Democrats. Louisiana and the election went to Hayes.

Treachery! cried Tilden's friends. What had happened to Conkling at the crucial moment? He had quietly taken a train for Baltimore.¹⁸ Afterward it was said that Kate was responsible, that she alone had persuaded him to give up his plan for a political upset.

At last she had accomplished what she had been struggling for all her life: she had had a hand in making a President. And Kate, who never forgot or forgave anything, used her instant of power for revenge, revenge on Samuel J. Tilden and Montgomery Blair and all the other Democrats who had refused the nomination to her father.

Her triumph was no secret, and two and a half years later the amazing story appeared on the front pages of some of the most powerful newspapers in the country. When Kate's lawyer later denied the reports, insisting that one of the Senator's colleagues was responsible for his decision, he was forced to admit lamely that his information was secondhand, that, in fact, he had never talked about the final outcome with Conkling. And he was also forced to concede that Conkling had organized a bolt against Hayes, that key Democrats had heard him tell of his plans, and that up until the last minute they had expected him to support their case.¹⁹

The story of Kate's influence persisted and became a political legend. And Washington society, which until then had politely ignored the close friendship of Kate and Conkling, abandoned the pretense and watched the two narrowly.²⁰ It was suspected that they would create more sparks before they were through.

Out of the bankruptcy of the democratic process the country miraculously got a good President. Hayes, a devotee of regularity, afternoon naps, and Stephen Foster, was a man with the courage of his convictions. He did not swear, smoke, or drink, and he did not like Roscoe

Conkling. Standing up to the pirates in Congress, he restored order and integrity to the Federal government, removed Federal troops from the South, put an end to the Radicals' Black Reconstruction, and pushed civil-service reforms through Congress. The White House once again became the Executive Mansion. Conkling loathed the new President and always referred to him as "Ruther-*fraud* B. Hayes." ²¹

A few weeks after Hayes's inauguration Kate went to Europe, the first time she had been abroad in ten years. Ostensibly her reason was to bring home her twelve-year-old son Willie, who had been studying in Germany for four years; but gossips noticed that in June, Roscoe Conkling managed to get away from Washington and Utica for a long trip on the Continent for his health. When he returned, the usually reserved Senator was in a strange mood. "He was more than exuberant, he was hysterical; and persons who didn't know him well assumed that he was drunk. But he wasn't. At least not with wine." ²²

In an excess of self-confidence, the Senator ran headlong into a battle with President Hayes over the New York Customhouse, the controversial suzerainty that had been the mainstay of many ambitious politicians, including Salmon P. Chase. In an attempt to spare the American taxpayer the expense of maintaining a small army of Conkling's mercenaries, the President issued an order prohibiting political activities by customhouse employees and, when his orders were disregarded, demanded the resignation of three of the principal offenders, including the collector of the port, Chester A. Arthur. They refused, and Conkling made an arrogant speech attacking civil-service reform. By the time a special session of Congress convened in the fall of 1877, the entire country was discussing the fight between Conkling and Hayes.²³ Before long, however, the capital turned its attention to Conkling and Kate.

When she returned from Europe, Kate went not to Canonchet, where her husband was living, but to Edgewood, where she remained as the countryside paled into winter. With her she brought her children and her rare china, European tapestries and fine paintings, her thick rugs and heavily carved chairs. Her friends enjoyed riding out from the center of town, past the turreted red-brick houses north of the Capitol

and the cemetery at the rim of town where Sprague had once camped with his troops, past bare, ice-laden trees and up the sweeping drive to the house overlooking the city and the cold stretches of the Potomac, gray as a stormy sky. There Kate was the sparkling center of intimate dinner parties, enlivened by the bright, quick small talk of statesmen. Roscoe Conkling was a frequent guest. By then he and Kate had dropped all pretense of discretion and were openly attending parties and the theater together.²⁴

Day after day Kate would drive into town to the Capitol; and all day long and often, toward the end of the session, far into the night, she would sit in the dreary, stifling Senate gallery watching with unflagging interest the slow-moving drama on the floor. No one, not even the Senators themselves, was able to sustain her animated interest in the tedious discourse of government, and it was soon surmised that she was less interested in the debates than in the golden-voiced Senator from New York. It was noted with amusement that as soon as Kate arrived, Conkling would find some excuse to enter into the argument on the floor. His fellow Senators, upon looking up and seeing her, would nudge each other knowingly and say, "Well, Conk's audience is all here." One day one bold Senator went up to Conkling and, chucking him playfully in the ribs, said, "Oh, you lucky dog, you!" He was rewarded with a look of pained displeasure.

Kate's constant attendance at the Capitol became a matter of public scandal; and before long, hundreds of people were crowding into the Senate each day to follow "lazily and maliciously . . . every movement of the foolish creatures who," according to one reporter, "found life too short for the affectionate intercourse of private hours alone to satisfy them."²⁵ In the galleries the curious onlookers saw a tall, slender beauty, her auburn hair drawn back severely from her face, her walking dress of the latest Parisian fashion complimenting her dramatic coloring and perfect figure. In her late thirties Kate Chase Sprague was more beautiful than she had ever been. Her unhappy marriage, the birth of four children, the death of her father — nothing seemed to have left its mark on her. Marveling at her loveliness, people found it hard to believe that she had been the belle of Washington for almost twenty years.

Conkling became increasingly flamboyant as he expanded before his private audience. A Senate page recalled later: "When he summoned a page . . . he would slap his hands above his head as Roman emperors . . . used to do, and would confide a message to the boy on a matter of the most ordinary routine as if he were conferring knight-hood upon him." His colleagues watched him in mute disgust; his airs were becoming preposterous and would have been rather droll if the Senator had not been so seriously consecrated to his illusions. Watching him strut through his localized fog of self-importance, Carl Schurz smiled wryly and called him "The Pouter Pigeon of the Senate,"²⁶ but Conkling's composure was scarcely ruffled by such remarks. Striding grandly about the Senate, striking his preconceived poses, thundering forth his views with the finality of a czar issuing a ukase, he put on a splendid show. Kate never took her eyes off him.

By the spring of 1878, they were openly exchanging messages in the Senate, much to the delight of the spectators. Kate would always let Conkling's note lie unnoticed in her lap a few moments as if it were of no consequence; and then, with all the women around her watching avidly, she would open it and read his message, written in mauve-colored ink. Sometimes he would send her a current political problem, saying, "I know your bright mind will solve this quicker than mine." More often, it was thought, the message was a love note, perhaps a compliment on her plum-colored walking dress or a line from one of his favorite poems. Kate would scribble a few words in reply and hand her message to a waiting servant. In a few moments Conkling would go over to the doors at the end of the center aisle of the Senate, where he would stand with his hands behind his back, apparently absorbed in the debate, until the doors opened a crack and a note was dropped into his hand — Kate's solution to the political problem or praise for his latest public colloquy or an answering line of poetry.²⁷

Conkling's private secretary frequently accompanied Kate to the Senate galleries, and often he would escort her to a Senate committee room and stand guard outside when Conkling joined her. What happened during those executive sessions was a topic of lively speculation. When newspapers investigated the rumor and found it true, they did

not print it at that time, out of regard for the parties involved. Washington society was not so kind. Many of its leading families, particularly the Blairs, refused to have anything to do with Kate; and Betty Blair Lee, the sister of Montgomery and Frank Blair, referred to her contemptuously as "that person."²⁸

Without her father to counsel her, Kate seemed to have no one who could persuade her to save her marriage; but there was one person who wanted to help — Sprague's mother. In the summer of 1878, she paid Kate a visit at Edgewood. Dismayed at the behavior of her son and daughter-in-law, which was humiliating their families and driving away their friends, that proud old woman tried to act as peacemaker, tried to soothe Kate's anger and persuade her to return to Canonchet. It was not easy; but Fanny Sprague, anxious to save Kate from disgrace and her son from drunkenness, did not give up without great effort.

Apparently affected by her pleas, Kate returned to Canonchet. But within a few weeks Sprague was arrested during a drunken orgy with Mary Eliza Viall Andersen; and, as the scandal rocked Rhode Island, Kate fled back into the womb of Edgewood with her children. She felt safe, she said, in "the neighborhood of old friends and the shelter of my honored father's former home. There, dwelling almost within the shadow of his tomb, I felt more secure, less unprotected."²⁹

But Kate was no longer a child who could run weeping to her father for protection. Even if he had been alive, he would have been unable to shield and comfort her: the chasm between them was now deeper than death.

The following winter Kate began to have serious difficulty keeping Edgewood going. Her small inheritance from her father's estate had been nearly wiped out by the depression; and after Sprague's financial failure he and his trustees had allowed her less than ten thousand dollars a year for her household expenses, hardly enough for her grand scale of living. A few months after she returned to Edgewood, Sprague stopped sending her any money whatsoever. He had got himself mixed up in a fight with the trustees of his estate and refused to accept any salary from them until the matter was straightened out to his satisfac-

tion. At first, not taking her husband seriously, Kate continued to accumulate large bills and send them on to him; but he ignored them, and when Kate pressed him for action, she was told curtly that "I must look to my powerful Washington friends for aid."³⁰ Before long Kate found herself in desperate trouble, unable to pay the taxes on Edgewood, which were long overdue.

Conkling came to her rescue. In February, 1879, that gallant gentleman got an obliging colleague to introduce into a money bill a clause exempting Edgewood "from all past taxation and future taxation so long as it is in possession of any child of the late Chief Justice."³¹ Senators looked up in astonishment: Conkling was showing his haughty disdain of public opinion by having a bill introduced for the sole benefit of Kate. The Senator was not very popular with his colleagues at the time. His long, acrimonious feud with Hayes over control of the New York Customhouse had just ended with victory for the President. The Senate was growing weary of his highhanded disregard of the public interest, of his sarcasm and petulance, his bursts of temper and petty feuds; and his enemies did not mean to let the Edgewood incident pass without notice.

Conkling soon jumped to his feet to demand an end to the discussion, which, he seemed to think, was being conducted in disconcertingly arch tones; and, despite the fuss and bluster, the Senate revealed that it was still under the heavy thumb of the Senator from New York in matters about which the President and people were not raising a clamor. It passed the tax exemption, but the Democratic House was in no mood to be obliging. All Conkling was able to salvage was a provision that Edgewood be exempted from taxes up to June, 1880.³²

A special session of Congress gave the Senator an excuse to stay on in Washington during the spring. Ostensibly he was living at Wormley's Hotel, but actually by then he was spending a great deal of time, both day and night, at Kate's country manor.

In the final days of the session, during one of the long stormy debates between Republicans and Southern Democrats, he got into a furious personal argument with Senator Lamar, a courtly ex-Confederate, on the floor of the Senate. Lamar, apparently convinced that the Re-

publicans, like Samson, meant to defeat their enemies with the jawbone of an ass, made some uncomplimentary remarks about Senator Conkling. Conkling leaped to his feet, demanding to know if Lamar had insulted him. If he had, Conkling roared, "nothing except the fact that this is the Senate would prevent me from denouncing him as a blackguard and a coward." Lamar replied icily that he *had*, indeed, called the Senator an unflattering name. For a moment it looked as if a fight, perhaps another Brooks-Sumner affair, would break out then and there.

As Lamar advanced toward Conkling a step or two, Kate, looking on from the gallery, turned deathly pale and slumped back into her seat. The rumor sped through the galleries that she had fainted. Kate denied it. She hardly knew of the affair until it was over, she explained later, and even then she had been affected only as a warm personal friend. But her denials could not change the fact that she had been so visibly alarmed that the entire Senate was taken aback.

The excitement was over in a second. Conkling glowered; then, not daring to challenge a duelist of Lamar's reputation, he hesitated, looked around with confusion, and tried to dismiss the matter with a nervous laugh. For once, not even the inevitable note from Kate could soothe his embarrassment. "Oh, it was exceedingly rich!" chortled his enemy Blaine. "I don't think I ever saw Conkling's wattles quite so red."

The Southern press rejoiced at the opportunity to goad its prize Northern devil. Lively with innuendo, one newspaper declared: "Vulgar by nature, and rapidly growing very coarse and common in his exterior—the result of habits which are no longer a secret at Washington—he has for two or three years attempted to make up his moral and intellectual losses by mere swagger." The implication of the remark was clear to more people than either Kate or the Senator would have liked. Their relationship had become national gossip; and by June there were rumors in Conkling's home town that his wife was about to institute divorce proceedings. The story was denied by a prominent Utica newspaper, but the rumor persisted.³³

Tongues wagged in the national capital and set others going in Rhode Island. When William Sprague heard what was being said about his wife and Conkling, he swore angrily that he was going to put an end to their affair once and for all.⁸⁴

CHAPTER VIII

The Gilded Lady

NARRAGANSETT PIER was not as exclusive as Newport, but it had become a fashionable resort since Kate had chosen it as the site for Canonchet, and every summer an increasing number of tourists packed their Saratoga trunks for a vacation on its shore. The Pier was transformed by its new importance: where once had been a few shabby buildings facing a dock and some sluggish lumber sloops was now a hustling, trim little village. Ancient farmhouses were remodeled to accommodate the new harvest of the countryside, but most of the visitors preferred to stay in the shiny new clapboard boardinghouses that strayed along the beach. During the last year of Grant's administration, or perhaps it was the first year of Hayes's—no one could remember—a branch of the Kingston Railroad had reached the Pier, and during the summer an asthmatic locomotive with one small passenger car would come whistling and puffing into town to unload its noisy passengers. For a moment vacationers would look up idly from their knitting and their newspapers, assay the newcomers, speculate briefly on where they belonged in the spectrum of hostelries, then, that civic duty done, settle back to their private pastimes.

Day after day the lazy, comfortable routine of the village was the same. Mornings were spent at lawn tennis, sailing, and bathing (eleven o'clock was the fashionable hour to be seen at the beach); in the afternoon, people strolled along the cliffs overlooking the bay; and in the evening the village came alive with music, drifting out from the brilliantly lit hotels, and carriages clattered through the streets on their way to fancy-dress balls, formal dinners, and theater parties. There was a Watteau-like charm about the Pier: a Sunday afternoon spent lounging amid the rocks by the ocean, ladies with their sunshades and novels,

the cadence of voices, endless as the surf, lawn parties of music and dancing, Punch and Judy shows for the children, mild flirtations for the adults. It seemed a splendid place for Senator Roscoe Conkling to vacation.¹

After Congress adjourned in the spring of 1879, Kate ordered her new summer frocks packed for her return to Canonchet. During the summer Edgewood would not be very pleasant: members of Congress, including Roscoe Conkling, were planning vacations at popular Northern spas and beaches, and soon Washington would be hot and deserted. Kate dreaded being left alone. At Narragansett she would be welcomed back into the gay seasonal world that was in a sense her own creation. Canonchet would come to life once again, and she would dominate that small glittering society that resided in the great mansions standing apart from the boardinghouses in the village. And, more important to Kate, she would have a chance to work out a settlement between Sprague and his trustee, necessary before she could get any more money from the estate.²

At the end of June she traveled to New York City to confer with her husband about her return. Like belligerents arranging a temporary armistice, they put forth their conditions. Sprague told Kate that she would have to live quietly at Canonchet. He was poor, he said; and, while in the midst of touchy financial negotiations with his trustee, he could not afford any display of extravagance. Kate listened absently. For her part, she demanded complete control of the children. Willie, Sprague's favorite, was now fourteen, old enough to be a close companion to his father; but Kate was determined that no intimacy should spring up between them. For years she had managed to keep them apart, first sending Willie to Germany and then putting him in a private school in Maryland. But the boy was a difficult child, bad mannered and willful; and Kate knew that despite all her efforts he loved his father. Dreading their unavoidable reunion that summer, she decided to keep Willie from Sprague's influence by engaging a German tutor named Professor Linck to take complete charge of her

son, providing him with "companionship, oral teaching, and example."³ Sprague was furious when he heard of the plan, but Kate was adamant. Willie and his tutor had already left for Canonchet, she said flatly, and she would follow with the rest of her children only if her arrangements were accepted.

Sprague went back to Narragansett in a black mood. For a long time he had looked forward to being alone with his son; and, resolved that no cheerless German professor should spoil his opportunity, he abruptly ordered Linck out of his house.⁴ The dispirited professor slunk back to New York; but Kate, ready to depart from Rhode Island, insisted that he return with her to a hotel near Narragansett Pier, where she intended to remain with her daughters until Sprague gave in to her orders. She did not doubt that eventually she would have her way. Sprague may have had moments of fiery independence, but it was she who never faltered and never surrendered.

When she did not hear from her husband for several days, Kate, impatient for a showdown, made off with Willie from under Sprague's nose and brought him to her hotel. That Sunday afternoon, as she was presiding over dinner with a faint but unmistakable smile of triumph, Sprague burst into the dining room drunk and fighting mad and, catching sight of Professor Linck, set out after him. After a lively chase through the hotel grounds, he caught him and, oblivious of the astonished bystanders, shook his cane in the awe-stricken tutor's face and roared, "Now, you damned Devil, if I find you again, near my children, or place, I will surely kill you, that I will, and take my word for it."⁵ Ladies dropped their fans in consternation, and gentlemen straightened their ties nervously and hurried out of earshot. It was clear that ex-Senator Sprague was in no ordinary temper.

Two days later, Kate reluctantly decided to move into Canonchet even though she had reached no agreement with her husband. She could see that he was not going to be easy to manage, but she did not give up hope. At her insistence, Linck gloomily retired to a nearby hotel to await a decision regarding his future. The professor was not happy to learn that the life of a tutor could be as hazardous as that of a Barbary pirate. He had a Teutonic sense of humor, and creeping

in and out of Canonchet for furtive conferences with Kate did not strike his fancy.

Even the appearance of the house disheartened him. Since the depression, nothing had been done to keep up the property. The grounds were weedy and unattended, and there was about the place a disturbing air of desolation. Whole areas of the house had been boarded up and allowed to fall into disrepair, and even the inhabited portion of the house seemed blighted. Voices echoed forlornly in the empty house, investing every sound with an unreal, dreamlike quality. Canonchet seemed cursed and abandoned, as if all its inhabitants had suddenly fled from it.

As time went on, living in that atmosphere wore Kate's nerves thin. When one of her friends called on her and asked about Sprague, Kate, her eyes blazing, replied that she "had taken no responsibility for his conduct for a long time, and it was not likely that she could long remain in the same house with him."⁶

During the first week of August, when Sprague went off to Maine on business, an uneasy calm settled over the household. Immediately afterward Roscoe Conkling, who had been lingering at Newport across the bay, arrived by boat at Narragansett Pier. Kate met him at the wharf, and they disappeared together into Canonchet, surrounded by a jade moat of rolling pasture land.⁷

Sprague had planned to be gone until Saturday, August 9; but late Thursday night he came home unexpectedly. The next morning he got up early, ate breakfast alone, and went into the village to play billiards. There he learned that Conkling was a guest in his house. Sprague's face went white. Flinging down his cue, he stamped out, muttering that "Senator Conkling was trying to do for his home in Rhode Island what he had already done for his home in Washington, and he had determined to put an end to it once and forever."⁸

That morning Kate had appeared undisturbed upon hearing the surprising news that her husband had come home and gone out again without explanation. "I paid no attention to this . . . as his movements are always erratic," she said. "He comes in on you like a ghost in the middle of the night and at the most unseasonable hours and hurries

away in the same disquieting manner. I had learned to be used to these freaks. . . ." She was calmly going about her household chores when Willie came running to her crying, "Mama, Papa's gun is loaded with three slugs, and if he shoots anyone he will kill them sure."

Sprague had gone upstairs to get his shotgun; but, finding that he had no percussion caps, he had rushed back into town to get some. Still Kate refused to lose her composure. When he returned from the village, Sprague found her sitting on the piazza reading to one of her guests. Nearby sat Conkling, the picture of conjugal peace, complacently reading his morning newspaper and stroking his beard. With great deliberation Sprague walked over to the Senator and, taking out his watch, gave him thirty seconds to get out, or, he said, "I will blow your brains out."

She could not hear what the two men were saying, Kate explained later, "but the tone . . . arrested my attention. I rose to my feet. Mr. Conkling walked straight across the room to where I stood and said:

"Mrs. Sprague, your husband is very much excited and I think it better for all of us if I should withdraw. If my departure puts you in any danger, so say, and I will stay, whatever the consequence."

"He spoke in a very calm voice, although I know he must have been excited. . . . Mr. Sprague stood about fifty feet off on the edge of the piazza eyeing us in a desperate sort of way. I knew I had done nothing wrong, and I tried to be as calm as I could.

"When Ethel wanted Mr. Conkling to stay I said: 'No, Ethel, Mr. Conkling will go but no one shall hurt either him or me. . . .'"

Fortunately, at that moment a carriage which had been ordered previously came up the drive. Hastily abandoning Kate and his luggage, Conkling scrambled in and was gone. Sprague picked up his shotgun and set out after him. He found the Senator pacing up and down in front of a café in the middle of town. Leaning out of his carriage, he bellowed, "I want you!" When Conkling reluctantly went over to him, Sprague cursed loudly in his face. He had had enough of the Senator's intimacy with his wife, he shouted, and he did not propose to have any more of it. He interrupted Conkling's inaudible reply to ask if he were armed. The Senator stiffened and in a strained

voice replied that if he were, Sprague would not dare go on as he was.

Ignoring the threat, Sprague snapped, "Then go and arm yourself, and hereafter go armed. I don't intend to shoot an unarmed man, but I tell you now that if you ever cross my path again I will shoot you at sight."¹⁰

The village froze in amazement at the spectacle of their ex-governor waving a shotgun at the red-haired, red-faced giant of New York. Carriages, whirling through town en route to the post office, screeched to a stop, and tourists, dozing peacefully on hotel piazzas, dropped their newspapers and stared. After Sprague drove away in a cloud of dust, Conkling turned around and walked across the street to Billington's Restaurant. Without a sign of emotion he chastely ate a bowl of crackers and milk, paid his bill, and walked out to the beach, where he absently poked holes in the sand with a little sun umbrella while he waited for his train. All the while he tried to appear unaware that the entire village was watching him.¹¹

While Sprague was in town, Kate slipped away from Canonchet. "I will never sleep under the same roof with Mr. Sprague again," she vowed. With her she took her daughters, but her son Willie chose to remain behind with his father. After a sleepless night at a hotel near the Pier, Kate brought her three children to Providence, where they went into strict seclusion. Conkling, who on Friday night had been the unexpected guest of Senator Anthony in Providence, left that city Saturday afternoon for Saratoga, New York, where he went into hiding. Perhaps Kate was surprised that he did not remain nearby to comfort her during the impending ordeal. Or perhaps she agreed that it was best that they should separate for the time being.

Conkling sent an emissary to negotiate with Sprague for his luggage and to work out a gentlemanly agreement to keep the whole affair out of the newspapers, but the Senator's man found that Sprague's temper had not cooled in the slightest and that he, for one, did not care whether there was publicity or not. He had no reputation to lose any more, and he was in no mood to protect Conkling or Kate.¹²

After the public brawl on the main street of Narragansett Pier, the issue was out of Sprague's hands anyway. Within a few hours Provi-

dence had been thrown into an uproar by the rumor that ex-Senator Sprague had shot Senator Conkling; and reporters, who had been complaining about the monotony of the dog days of August, joyfully swooped down upon the Pier for details. They were welcomed by open-mouthed tourists, delighted to find their vacation festooned with a national scandal. Each had his own version of what had happened, but out of the maze of conflicting stories emerged one stunning fact: two of the country's most controversial politicians had had a furious public quarrel about the nation's most publicized beauty.

Within a few days an avalanche of newsprint was pouring out of Rhode Island, and the sensational story in one form or another was on the front pages of nearly every newspaper in the country. Editors suddenly found that it had become their civic duty to pass judgment on Kate's marriage, her political career, and Sprague's drinking habits, along with Senator Conkling's choice of recreation and the larger questions of chastity, morality, and the American family. Reporters, when they had exhausted the imagination of every witness, compared the height, weight, and coloring of the principals, and discussed the terrain and natural wonders of Rhode Island, sped to Washington to get a broader view of the celebrated "incident of watering-place life";¹³ and they made certain that the nation heard every whisper about Kate's and Conkling's long incautious courtship, including the story of their part in the disputed election of 1876.¹⁴

The shotgun incident was pursued with such journalistic enterprise that finally one sophisticated weekly, torn between amusement and professional pride, observed: "Under the newspaper practices now in vogue there ought to have been in all the papers a biography of Mr. & Mrs. Sprague, a biography of Mr. Conkling . . . and a full history containing all the flying rumors and 'society gossip' that could be collected of Mr. Conkling's relations with Mrs. Sprague, with a plan of the piazza at Canonchet, a drawing of the gun, and an appendix containing reminiscences of other scimmages between prominent politicians."¹⁵

Much of the public comment about Kate was not flattering,¹⁶ but there were admirers who rushed to her defense. Admitting that her

conduct had not always been up to the standards of Miss Grundy, one writer gallantly called for reserved judgment: "Long before Miss Kate Chase was Mrs. Sprague she was a leader in Washington society, and accustomed to intercourse on familiar terms with public men. It was entirely natural for her to keep up and extend those intimacies after her marriage, and she could do this and prefer life in Washington to her uncongenial home in Rhode Island, after it had become such, without affording ground for vile scandal."¹⁷

To this and other apologies, the public lent a deaf ear, finding more persuasive the simple motto: "When in doubt call it adultery."¹⁸

Seeing the tide of imputation engulfing Kate, Whitelaw Reid, editor of the *New York Tribune*, took it upon himself to attribute the current excitement to New York state politics. "Mrs. Sprague has some right to generous treatment from the American public," he said. "She is the daughter of a man who did the country great service. . . . The very friendship which is now tortured to her discredit was formed under her father's roof, and because she was her father's daughter. Her habits, her associations, the fated prominence given to her great gifts and beauty are all the direct result of her father's devotion to the public duties that were laid upon him."¹⁹

Had Chase been alive to read those words, his heart would have been broken. But perhaps he had anticipated the judgment, knowing that his devotion to his public duty — or to his ambition — had forged Kate's character and her destiny.

Delighted with the editorial, Roscoe Conkling sent Reid a furtive note of thanks, but to the public he said nothing in behalf of Kate. In hopes of enhancing an already excellent story, people raised a hue and cry against his lack of chivalry. "The opponents of Senator Conkling do not charge him with criminality, but with ungentlemanly conduct, impudence and cowardice," chided one upright citizen. ". . . he ought to restore . . . [Mrs. Sprague's] domestic peace and her good name as a wife. . . ." But to the dismay of his followers, Conkling, the golden voice of the Senate, was unaccountably silent. From Utica came only another prim denial that Mrs. Conkling was instituting divorce proceedings.²⁰

Washington political society rejoiced at the Senator's embarrassment, and from the vantage point of the White House, President Hayes observed: "The Conkling scandal is the newspaper sensation of the time. This exposure of Conkling's rottenness will do good in one direction. It will weaken his political power, which is bad and only bad."²¹

As things began to look bleak for the Senator, there appeared in the press an entirely new version of that Black Friday at Canonchet: Sprague had chased Professor Linck, not Roscoe Conkling, away from his home; and the Senator, who happened at that time to be paying an innocent visit to Narragansett Pier to advise Sprague on financial matters, had heroically rescued an invalid guest from Sprague's insane rage. The Linck story was given some weight when the professor issued a lengthy account of his various stormy encounters with Sprague, including an unexpected meeting at the front door of Canonchet on the day in question.²²

Linck's lively story gave rise to even livelier speculation, and before long the public was convinced that Kate and Conkling had engineered the statement to distract attention from themselves. Laughing rudely, one reporter called it "a piece of the veriest bosh imaginable." In Washington people smiled wanly when they heard of Professor Linck. As one Senator remarked, they were convinced that "Conkling and Sprague were not brought together on account of so inconsiderable a person as a German teacher."²³

Like an angry sea the national gossip beat against Kate's locked door in a Providence hotel, and above the roar she heard the rising tide of ribald laughter. Kate Chase Sprague, the haughty queen of society and fashion, was being deposed by ridicule. Frantically she tried to save herself. She told reporters that she would make a statement and then changed her mind. She held long conferences with her lawyers and, it was said, with friends of Conkling's. She stormed at Professor Linck because his statement was not all that she had wanted. And all the while, Ohio and Washington and New York whispered and tittered and read the newspapers.

At one time Kate could have counted on the sympathy of the public without having to court it with a single word in her own defense; but

1879 was no ordinary year, and feelings were not running their ordinary course.

After the war, when the North had turned away from the rectangles of newly turned soil on the battlefields, averted its eyes from the smoking ruins of the South, and closed its ears to the questions of the Negro, it had looked to the ballroom and the salon and the parlor for relief. For years people had been chained to the big problems of survival and separation and death; and with the end of the fighting they wanted only diversion and luxury. Kate Chase Sprague had been mistress of that synthetic world, dominating the spectacle with her classical beauty and her imported gowns, her wit and vivacity. She had been applauded and admired by the public, and her brilliant social career had been a source of wonder to millions of people who knew her only through the reports of newspaper correspondents like Miss Grundy.

But the long gray years of depression had thinned that admiration to resentment; and, as class conflict brewed in the grimy pot of poverty and hardship, Kate became less the symbol of a dream than a focus for indignation. Kate, the queen of tasteful prodigality, Kate, well traveled and urbane, Kate, gowned in fine brocade: this enchanting image, so popular in the sixties, did not sit well on empty stomachs. While millions were pacing the streets looking for work, Kate, struggling along on the "palpably inadequate sum" Sprague allowed her, maintained a large country estate well staffed with servants and gave over the care of her children to nurses and tutors. While there were strikes and riots in the United States, Kate was making another of her celebrated tours of Europe; and when she returned, Congress, which had done little to alleviate the suffering of the rest of the country, gave her special tax relief.

By 1879 prosperity had returned to the country; but the public, shocked by its long ordeal, remained in a surly mood, and the facts that came out during Kate's quarrel with her husband only served to increase her unpopularity. Slowly the damning evidence was pieced together: rumors that Kate married Sprague for his money; stories about her astonishing extravagance (it was she who contributed to President Grant's second inaugural ball an immense floral wheel cost-

ing a thousand dollars, a secondhand nosegay she had previously used as an ornament for a dinner party); her unwillingness to economize after Sprague's financial failure (it was said that she had had twenty guests at her first Sunday dinner after returning to Canonchet).²⁴ In the minds of most people, Kate was condemned, having transgressed against their sense of justice by the same actions that had once brought her admiration and praise.

Deeply shocked and angered by the indignation of the public, Kate finally decided that she had to deflect resentment to Sprague, destroying his threadbare reputation to save her own. A man with a genius for making mistakes and enemies, her husband seemed painfully vulnerable. By then his only remaining claim to respect was his public war record, and his friends still gamely answered every charge against him by recalling that his horse was shot out from under him at the First Battle of Bull Run. Kate knew that it was within her power to strip that last badge of honor from him. She could, if she wished, recall the Texas Adventure, the unallayed suspicions, the unanswered charges, break his pose of innocence by merely calling him guilty or condemn him by telling what she knew of those clandestine wartime trips to Rhode Island, the meetings with Reynolds, the unexplained cargoes of cotton that appeared at the family mills in Providence. And what she did not know, she could invent, elaborating upon the findings of the Senate committee that had looked into the venture. She could brand the fighting war governor with the name of traitor. But she did not dare, for the Texas Adventure was a double-edged sword. If she spoke out now, how could she justify her long silence? How could she explain away the years she had remained with Sprague, knowing what he had done? And how could she protect her father, who, innocent or not, would have to share the shame? Would Sprague not retaliate by accusing Chase of having been an accessory? And would the public, remembering Frank Blair's charges on the floor of the House, not listen and be convinced? No, Kate could not risk using the Texas Adventure to win her case before the public.

When she decided she could remain silent no longer, she was forced to rely on some of her husband's lesser shortcomings. She publicly ac-

cused him of refusing to support her separate household, of resenting Professor Linck and of being dissolute. People reacted by frowning at her bad taste. Sprague, trying desperately to save his property, could be forgiven his unwillingness to pay her bills, piled up like stacks of dirty dishes after her large parties in Washington. The issue of where Professor Linck was to spend the summer was not one to capture the imagination of the public; in fact, most people were as bored by Kate's German tutor as they had been by her father's insistence on control of the New York Customhouse, both matters of patronage. And many who had suffered the hardships of the depression were not particularly shocked to learn that the ex-Senator, ex-millionaire, spent a great deal of his time drunk. The nice, respectable people who were shocked were equally disapproving of Kate's behavior with Conkling. Few were deceived when she said, "Governor Sprague's causeless persecution of the children's teacher is literally true as he tells the story. The attempt to complicate Mr. Conkling with this matter is absurd. . . ." ²⁵

Sprague, not Kate, got all the sympathy. The public seemed to forgive him for once having had twenty-five million dollars, perhaps because Kate, not he, had made a great show of spending it; and it sympathized with him in his bitter legal fight with his trustees, seeing in the complicated, undramatic struggle a suggestion of David and Goliath — Sprague against the great powers, the money powers he had attacked in his Senate speeches. And in their pity people seemed to forget what they could not forgive — Sprague's attacks on American womanhood, his insults to heroes of the war, the Texas Adventure. The scandals he had been involved in were more than canceled out by the conduct of his wife.

Sprague, finding that he was not being called upon to defend himself, was able to maintain a dignified silence when Kate publicly berated him. It was Professor Linck who fatally blasted her attempts to twist the facts. Informing reporters that he resented the liberties Mrs. Sprague was taking with his name, he remarked, "I have been of [the] opinion that Mrs. Sprague had it in her power . . . to effect a reconciliation between herself and her husband, but that her proud

spirit forbade it. However little there might be left of his former manhood, to reclaim that little might have been worth the attempt."²⁶

A week after the scene at Canonchet, while the country was still agog over its glimpse into the private lives of certain of its public figures, Kate, accompanied by her daughters and one of her lawyers, returned to Narragansett Pier to get the rest of her belongings. Hoping to avoid her husband, she remained at the Pier while her lawyer went on to Canonchet to arrange for her return; but Sprague, upon learning of her arrival, immediately drove into town and confronted her. They had a violent argument. Sprague accused Kate of adultery, swore he was not the father of her daughters, and charged her with squandering the money he sent her on Roscoe Conkling. He had had enough of her deceit, he roared. He was going back to Canonchet, and he was taking the children with him.

Kate turned to her lawyer to stop him, but he shook his head helplessly. As matters stood, Sprague had every legal right to the children, he told her. What was she to do? asked Kate desperately. She could return to Canonchet, too, if she wished, said Sprague.

"I am afraid to go," said Kate. "He will kill me."

"You need not be afraid," replied Sprague stiffly. "I was never known to harm anyone."

Had he not aimed a gun at her only the week before? Kate asked.

"Yes," he said with evident satisfaction, "and it was loaded, too."

Finally, exhausted by the quarrel and frantic about the separation from her children, Kate gave in and returned to Canonchet. As the Spragues disappeared down the road, a wide-eyed bystander prattled everything she had heard to reporters. Once again the Spragues were headline news. Immediately an ugly suspicion bobbed to the surface of rumors and stories: Kate had been forced to go back to her husband by none other than Roscoe Conkling.²⁷

On Saturday, two days after Kate's return, a *New York Sun* reporter drove up to Canonchet in the hope of getting Sprague to elaborate on the charges he had made against his wife. Although it was clear that he was exhausted and unhappy, Sprague received him politely and remained calm until asked if it was true, as reported, that he

was holding his wife a prisoner. He was only trying to protect her from distractions so that they could come to some understanding, he insisted heatedly, but he would say nothing more. When the correspondent asked to see Kate, Sprague hesitated, then shrugged his approval.

The reporter was directed to the second floor where a broad doorway opened into an opulently furnished room, half parlor and half library, with a bay window facing the front lawn. Within sat Kate, deathly pale but composed. She was glad to see him; and, unlike her husband, she had something to say.

"I have sent for you," she began erroneously, but the fascinated reporter seemed unaware that he had come because of his own curiosity, "because I wish to correct some false impressions which have gone abroad in regard to my conduct at Thursday's meeting." The reporter admired her aristocratic presumption, her cold, emotionless, ivory face. "I did not charge my husband, as has been stated, with untruthfulness, nor did I make the verbal attacks upon him which I have been represented as doing. On the contrary, I bore with meekness the unmanly sneers and reproaches that he showered on me, not responding save when my children's relations to me were touched upon. . . . God knows that I have no reason to fear the truth, though for thirteen long years my life has been a constant burden and drag upon me."

The reporter bent over his pad of notes. What had happened to the Spragues' marriage in 1866? That was the year when rumors of their divorce were first published, the year when Kate made her first trip to Europe alone. The reporter may have smiled. His newspaper would comment: "One remark of Mrs. Sprague's is calculated to elicit in her behalf a world of pity. She says: 'For thirteen long years my life has been a constant burden and drag upon me.' When it is remembered that within that period she has been three times made a new and apparently happy mother, the mysterious complications, to say [nothing of] the contradictions, of her case seem to grow inexplicable. . . ."

". . . Mr. Conkling never paid me any attention that a wife could not honorably receive from her husband's friend, and it is false to say otherwise," Kate was saying. "Mr. Sprague was simply worked upon by his business troubles, which had been culminating for years, and by

his indulgence in strong drink. He regarded everyone, no matter how honorable, who was a friend of mine, as an interloper and intriguer against him."

"Why did Mr. Conkling venture to come under these circumstances?" asked the reporter dryly, apparently wondering how he would have felt had he come home unexpectedly to find his wife having breakfast with one of his friends.

She had asked the Senator to advise her husband on financial matters, said Kate coolly.

"The attempt to complicate Mr. Conkling with this matter is absurd," she had insisted previously. "If any hostile words were exchanged between Mr. Conkling and Governor Sprague at Canonchet they alone know what they were, for no one else heard them." Suddenly, to the astonishment of the reporter, Kate dropped that pretense. She admitted that her husband had chased the Senator, not Professor Linck, out of his house; and she described the incident in detail — Willie's hysterical warning, Sprague's breaking in upon the quiet domestic scene on the piazza, Conkling's offer to stay at her side to defend her, and his flight to Narragansett Pier.

By then Kate knew that her attempt to hide the truth had failed. Professor Linck's subsequent statements had not supported her original story, and there had appeared a host of witnesses only too willing to tell another tale. Her only hope seemed to be to tell what had happened in such a way that Sprague would appear bestial and insane and Conkling, noble and pure. And Kate? She had to take the difficult role of the wronged innocent. "I knew I had done nothing wrong, and I tried to be as calm as I could," she said. She denied that Conkling had engineered the false story about the tutor, and she denied all the popular rumors about her relationship to the Senator: that she had met him secretly at the Capitol and sent him notes in the Senate, that she had almost fainted during the Conkling-Lamar fight. "I loathe to speak of these things," she said, "but they have been dwelt upon until, instead of monstrous falsehoods, they appear to the public like admitted facts."

Kate's statement appeared in the Sunday edition of the *Sun*, and it echoed around the country.²⁸

Asked if he wanted to make a reply to his wife's new version of the scene at Canonchet, Sprague answered that he would say nothing except that he had ordered Conkling out of his house and that his reasons would come out eventually. "Mrs. Sprague, I know, has made her statement, but I really do not know what it contained, neither do I wish or care to know. I believe justice will be better done to all parties in the end if I say nothing at all; and that I assure you is my final answer."²⁹

After having made a spectacle of his feelings toward Conkling for many months, Sprague had not been expected to assume a stoical silence in the face of Kate's accusations and the wild rumors current in the press. But it was clear that he was not the man he had been earlier in the summer. All the signs of his anxiety—his strangely jumbled conversation, his preoccupation and restlessness—had vanished, and everyone who came in contact with him remarked in amazement about his sudden composure, his reserve and self-possession.³⁰ The truth was that, in spite of the scandal, in spite of his financial and political ruin, he was enjoying a sense of satisfaction and well-being that he had not had for a long, long time.

Up until that summer his life with Kate had been a continuous nightmare, unrelieved by politics or business, liquor or prostitutes. She had many consolations for the failure of their marriage—her father, her admirers, her cleverness and her children, her imported wardrobe and Canonchet. And when everything else failed, she had the satisfaction of taunting her husband. Sprague was defenseless. Since his childhood he had been troubled by a sense of weakness, a feminine softness that he had tried to conceal by a clash of arms and a passion for whiskey and women. His childish imagination demanded that he hide himself by playing the hero, and during the war he had posed for a portrait of himself in the dress uniform of a general. But Kate put an end to the masquerade. Faced with her derision, Sprague, the fighting war governor, collapsed. His clumsy stabs at revenge were calamitous only to him.

At Canonchet that August Friday morning Sprague had at last found the courage and the opportunity to redeem himself; and, inspirited by hatred, he had chased the masculine matinee idol of the

Senate out of his home and out of his state. Afterward he was almost happy; Kate's disgrace was his salvation.

No, Sprague needed to say nothing in his defense. What he had done was eloquent enough, and the more Kate tried to explain away that surprising scene, the more his silence added to his stature.

On the Monday after Kate's return to Canonchet, a devastating storm hit the Atlantic seaboard, paralyzing the fashionable resorts of the North at the height of their season. Huddled in gloomy parlors, vacationers had little to do except talk about the Sprague-Conkling affair, but by then the storm at Narragansett Pier seemed to have spent itself. Professor Linck had dropped from view after expressing his indignation at Kate's free use of his name. Kate was reported settled quietly in one wing of Canonchet; Sprague and the children, in another. Reports that Kate was being held prisoner dwindled in spite of their charm in the face of persistent evidence that she was now staying of her own free will in hopes of getting custody of her children. "For the present ex-Governor Sprague and his spirited wife are at peace, and it is not improbable that they will become reconciled to each other, as they have on many previous occasions," the press announced regretfully.

Speculation about adultery, even that of a Senator, has its limitations, especially when the sun is shining; and, as Easterners trooped back to their beaches, interest in Sprague and Kate and Conkling diminished.³¹

At Canonchet, Sprague watched Kate stealthily pack away silver, jewelry, paintings — all the valuable things that she called hers. Some of the mysterious crates were smuggled out; the rest disappeared into the maze of deserted apartments in the back of the house.³² Sprague did not put an end to Kate's looting, but he increased his watch over the real treasure — the three little girls. He knew that more than anything in the world, more than her imported gowns and priceless art treasures, Kate wanted her daughters; and her obsession gave him an inspiration for cruel revenge. He who had always been excluded from Kate's concentrated circle of love would smash it, destroy it forever.

He would keep the children, his children perhaps, Kate's children surely.

As long as the girls remained in Rhode Island, Sprague was their legal guardian. Determined that they were not to be removed from his control, he hovered over them sleeplessly, always listening for the sound of their voices at play. As the hot, humid month of August drew to a close, the tension at Canonchet subtly heightened, and a thrill of expectation stirred the quiet house. Gauging the tempo of Kate's secret preparations, Sprague knew that she would attempt to escape with the children soon. Tempers of the watched and the watcher wore thin.

Suspecting that Kate's plan was to escape at night with the help of the children's nurse, Sprague went up to the nursery on the last Friday in August to tell his wife that there was to be no further night duty for her attendants. He was met by a barred door and the announcement that the children were not dressed to see him. Sprague's patience snapped. Kicking in the door, he shouted, "I'll show you who is master here!" and, grabbing Kate's arm, he dragged her across the room and tried to push her out of a window. Ethel, Portia, and Kitty screamed in terror as their horrified nurse ran to rescue their mother.⁸³

By the next morning the violent struggle in the nursery appeared to have been forgotten. After breakfast Kate went out alone, but she returned almost immediately; and the few guests staying at Canonchet noticed how smoothly dinner proceeded. Afterward Sprague went to his room to rest. As evening shadows advanced into the room, he lay there half asleep, listening to the noise of the children playing. He must have dozed off for a few moments. Suddenly he sat upright, his heart beating wildly. The house was silent. Realizing that some time had passed since he had heard voices, he scrambled to his feet and groped his way out of the darkened room. Outside he met some workmen returning from a project at the far end of the estate. One of them mentioned that he had just seen Mrs. Sprague and her three daughters heading away from the house in a carriage.⁸⁴

Hoping to waylay the late-afternoon train which had just left the Pier, Sprague set out at breakneck speed for Kingston Junction, eight miles away; but to his despair he found that Kate was not aboard. She

had escaped. Where she had gone, how she had gone, Sprague had no idea.³⁵

Hoping to capture public sympathy, Kate had arranged for the story of her escape to be coupled with her version of the fight in the nursery; but, for the most part, the press and public had become impatient with her various statements and unpredictable conduct. Some newspapers irreverently burlesqued her escape, running the story under the headline KATY DID BUT THE QUESTION IS, HOW DID SHE? The *New York World* summed up the general reaction to her disappearance: "She has gone; nobody . . . knows just where she is, and what is very strange nobody . . . seems to be interested in her whereabouts except as a matter of curious news. The lady has pained and annoyed her friends here greatly by her whole course. Her statements [have not been] consistent . . . and her strange flight on Saturday evening has caused very great embarrassment to all her friends. . . ." ³⁶

Toward the end of September Washington slowly began to come to life after its long summer incubation. More loafers were seen resting their elbows on Willard's bar, the tempo of remodeling the hotels increased, a few parties were given, and the women of the capital began selecting their winter wardrobes. As Washingtonians reluctantly quit spas and beaches and streamed across the country to the city, the great leviathan government shook itself sleepily and began to think about its work.

Late one Friday afternoon that month Kate Chase Sprague, her three daughters, and a nurse arrived at Edgewood from New York City. Kate's quiet return did not escape notice, and she was home only a few hours before there was a knock at her door. It was a reporter. The house needed airing and cleaning, trunks had to be unpacked, and Kate was tired. But she was in no position to slam the door in the face of the press, and she knew it.

The impertinent correspondent was politely received, and Kate, "looking the least bit older and fatigued, led the way to the drawing-room." The reporter began by asking if it were true, as rumored, that she was planning a trip to Europe. Kate said no: she meant to make

Edgewood her home that winter as she had planned when she left for Rhode Island in the spring.

"And here you intend to keep your children?"

"Yes," said Kate, "I have but little doubt they will be safe here. My attendants are devoted and will let no harm come to me. Here I can be quiet and wait for my wrongs to be righted. I have been maligned and ground down until I have felt that I was a target at which everybody could fire, and yet without means or method of redress. But I am willing to wait, because I know that everything must come right in time, and in the best way."

Then sympathy had been lacking during her difficulties? asked the reporter.

"On the contrary," said Kate quickly, "the kind feelings manifested by my friends have touched me deeply. Especially has this kindness been exhibited in the South. The papers there, with a chivalry that is natural, have with one accord taken my part because I was a woman and defenseless. . . . Some of these days the chivalry of the North will grant me the same fairness, and I hope to show that it is not unmerited."

The reporter watched her closely. She was saying, "The bitterest part of my recent troubles has been that I should be thought a silly, vain woman. Why, I have been trained to look upon dignity and brains as of the highest importance, and I have a high regard for conventionalities, although I believe I have not that reputation. To be so misrepresented, so misunderstood, has given me my greatest pain."⁸⁷

She spoke to the reporter, but she seemed to be speaking half to herself, as if she were trying to suppress some aching thought, a memory that reproached her. She was never able to escape the presence of her father, especially at Edgewood; but, returning to his house that autumn, she was beset by a sense of loss, an estrangement from all that he had left her. It was he who had wanted Kate to have dignity and brains, most of all, dignity. Never could she escape the echo of his words: "I realize painfully how far short I am of my own ideal; but I am not the less desirous that you should succeed when I fail."⁸⁸ Now she knew that she had failed him. She had dishonored his name.

CHAPTER IX

Pillar of Salt

QUIETLY Kate slipped into a seat in the Senate gallery. The crowds, absorbed in the debate, took no notice of her. For a few minutes she seemed to be listening to the speaker; then, as if tiring of the familiar, time-worn arguments, she was lost in her own thoughts. On the floor below was the aging Roscoe Conkling, his celebrated Titian hair streaked with gray. Time had robbed the Senator's whip-lash oratory of some of its sting; but he still held his ground, surviving on bluff and bluster, a tarnished ornament perhaps, but an ornament nonetheless. After his abrupt leave-taking of Kate and Canonchet, there had been much speculation about his future as a politician. It was said that his presidential chances were ruined and that even his position in the Senate was in jeopardy. It was clear that Conkling himself thought his chances of survival improved by remaining as remote from the affair as possible. The attentive press was unable to report any subsequent meetings between him and Kate or, for that matter, any relevant comment from the Senator.

Did Kate know that Conkling's services to her had come to an end when she predicted, ". . . everything must come right in time, and in the best way"? Upon reflection she should not have been surprised at his attitude. Could Kate, who had been willing to marry William Sprague for her father's career—could she wonder that Roscoe Conkling was willing to give her up for his? Now, when she came to the Senate gallery, she did not send him notes of encouragement, nor did she even glance his way. She no longer expected him to show any signs of recognition.¹

Watching the curiously restrained tableau from the reporters' gallery,

Olivia sighed, remembering Kate's dramatic appearances in the Senate gallery in the past. Why, to that very day she could still see her, dressed in a velvet suit of royal purple, arriving to watch her father preside over the impeachment trial. Now, twelve years later, Kate was dressed simply, as if she were in mourning, with only a scarlet scarf at her neck to relieve the severity of her appearance. She still tilted her head in that proud cameo pose, but the reporter fancied that she saw despair in Kate's eyes.

Pity tugged at Olivia's heart, and she left the gallery to write a column that would bring a tear to the eyes of her sentimental readers. *She* had never seen Kate pay Senator Conkling any attention whatsoever, she said, and she refused to believe the vicious stories current in the press. Olivia laid the blame for Kate's troubles on the faithlessness of her friends.²

It was true that Kate's friends had not made her ordeal easy. Few people other than a curious reporter had driven out to Edgewood to welcome her home the previous fall, and by winter she had begun to feel oppressed by her isolation. If she occasionally allowed herself to part the curtains in the front parlor and look expectantly toward the Capitol, she turned away disappointed. The road to Edgewood was empty. People who still valued her advice on political matters were not willing to risk censure by seeking her out; and capital society, finding that it could do without her parties and edicts on fashion, preferred to flounder along without a leader rather than take her back. It was not that Washington was unsophisticated. Intrigue was the business and pleasure of the city; but when Kate, once the consummate leader of that dangerous game, stripped it of all its restraint and good taste, her friends, in an excess of self-righteousness, turned her out. She had betrayed them by exaggerating their virtue into a vice.

Kate did not understand the full significance of what had happened to her that summer in Rhode Island; and, driven from Edgewood by loneliness, she took her three daughters to Washington, where she rented Commodore Goldsboro's house, only twelve blocks from her old home at Sixth and E. But she soon discovered that she could not return to the capital, at least not for a while. People failed to notice

her, and she was rarely included in pre-Lenten social affairs. She bore her exile silently. Did she still expect vindication? No one knew; for Kate, who had expressed herself so freely the summer before, was now strangely quiet, leaving her defense in the hands of stray partisans such as a high-minded columnist called Olivia.³

Until that spring Kate had never bothered to notice Olivia; but, after reading that reporter's kind words, she was no longer indifferent, knowing that in the trying times ahead she was going to need every friend she could find. A few days after assuming the role of apologist, Olivia was set aflutter by an invitation to lunch with Mrs. Sprague at her temporary residence in fashionable West End.

On that much anticipated April afternoon Kate greeted her with a flattering demonstration of cordiality, observing pointedly that she did not mind being discussed in the press if the articles were fairly done. Olivia savored the compliment until all the guests had arrived and were ready to be conducted into the dining room. It was one of the most beautiful in Washington; and the vulnerable reporter was overwhelmed by the opulence of its furnishings—a priceless Gobelin tapestry, reputed to have hung in Marie Antoinette's palace, paintings done by the old masters, a heavy Persian rug on the inlaid floor, and in the corner a Parisian clock chiming away the long afternoon hours.⁴

During the first course, Kate entertained her company with a story about the bowls in which the French bouillon was served. Made of crushed garnets in Persia, they had been carried over the Ural Mountains by mule train, she said. Half an hour later the company was served the second course—sherry “clear as limpid amber and colored like a meerschaum pipe” and oyster patties, served on plates originally produced by the Sèvres porcelain works near Paris for a royal family in Europe. The sweetbreads which followed the oyster patties were also served on Sèvres china, which Kate had designed for her father, each plate depicting a different wild flower of Ohio.

Sadly Olivia reflected that her hostess no longer had the money to command the priceless treasures of Europe and Asia; and her feelings, set awash by amber sherry and pale champagne, swelled until she imagined that the gulf between Kate's former power and her present

estate dominated the feast like an eyeless skull gaping at the guests. But her melancholy was dimmed by the demands of the relentless march of courses—Virginia mountain lamb and Florida green peas, custard and charlotte russe, more meat, vegetables, and salads, each on different porcelain, each plate with its own remarkable history. At last, after several hours, the guests were served ices and fruits, and the long ordeal was over.⁵

Unwittingly, Kate had defeated herself. Like most Washingtonians, Olivia knew of her public complaints of financial hardship; and, seeing her plain dress and pale face that day in the Senate, the reporter had conjured up a picture of poverty and suffering. Kate promptly rewarded her sympathy by destroying her illusions. With the best of intentions Olivia faithfully described the party in her column, but few of her readers were likely to shed a tear for the good old days when Kate was able to have everything she wanted.

The irony of Kate's failure was that her little spectacle was a deception. No longer supported by Sprague, she was almost bankrupt, unable to live on the scant income from her father's estate.⁶ Her household was consuming itself, the masterpieces from Edgewood and Canonchet gradually disappearing in a merciless barter for food and taxes and servants' pay. A prisoner of her talent, Kate, in a reckless compulsion of pride and habit, served luncheons on Sèvres china in her splendid dining room while laying waste to the rooms closed off at the back of the house. But she found that she could not buy indulgence. Washington had a stony bosom, and all Kate's sacrifices went for nothing. Her parties were thinly attended and her invitations few.

Late in the spring she moved back to Edgewood, but her old dissatisfaction with country living soon drove her away. During the following summer and fall, Sprague heard that she was seen at the Westminster Hotel in New York and Pierce's Palace Hotel in Buffalo, that she was in Lockport and later in Chicago. In December, 1880, he was informed that she had filed a petition for divorce.

The final chapter in the affairs of the Spragues promised to be as spectacular as recent events at Canonchet, for Kate did not spare her husband in her request for a divorce. She accused him of committing

"adultery with divers women at divers places and times" and went on to name several notorious prostitutes, including Mary Eliza Viall Andersen, author of *The Merchant's Wife*. In addition she charged him with nonsupport, cruelty, drunkenness, making attempts on her life, insulting her in public, and accusing her of improprieties with other men, "sometimes one, sometimes another." ". . . he has often said to his children that he was not their father, and that they were not his children. . . ." Since her departure, he had allowed Canonchet to become a place of drunken revelry, a resort of people of vicious reputation who were corrupting her son Willie, she said. Kate demanded a divorce, custody of all her children, and permission to use her maiden name.⁷

To Kate's sensational charges Sprague replied stiffly, "However much I may know derogatory to the good name of my wife, I will simply allege that by her reckless extravagance she has squandered my vast wealth and beggared me." But a month later he filed a counter-suit, claiming that Kate had "committed the crime of adultery, and . . . been guilty of other gross misbehavior, and wickedness," and charging her with desertion, slander, ruinous extravagance, and cruelty toward her son. As for himself, Sprague said, he had faithfully kept his marriage vows and been a kind, dutiful, and affectionate husband.⁸

As the press was gleefully forecasting more spicy charges to come, the front-page story unexpectedly collapsed. Apparently exhausted by their hatred, Sprague and Kate dropped their charges of adultery; and in May, 1882, Kate was granted a divorce on the grounds of nonsupport, a charge that Sprague, being bankrupt, could bear without dishonor. Kate was allowed to assume her maiden name, by which she had always been known, even after her marriage, and she was given custody of the three girls; but Sprague was made the legal guardian of Willie, her only son and the grandchild who was Chase's pride.⁹

Immediately after her divorce was final, Kate sailed for Europe with her daughters. She was running away, away from the silence of Edgewood, the silhouette of the distant Capitol, the empty afternoons. She was not made to be a martyr. In a few years, when Washington had forgotten Sprague and Conkling, she would come home and reopen

her salon at Edgewood to Presidents and ministers and Senators. She would come back. She needed only time.

Roscoe Conkling left Washington before she did. Like Kate, he failed to understand the finality of passing time. In 1880, bloated with self-confidence after his little triumphs over Victorian morality, he swaggered into the Chicago convention of the Republican Party to nominate General Grant as Hayes's successor. Grant was to be the figurehead; the power, the real power, was to be the Senator from New York. The convention band struck up the favorite battle songs of the Union army; and, as nostalgia gripped the hall, Conkling arose to speak for the Old Guard, the men who had saved the Union. He filled his barrel chest, threw back his head, and boomed:¹⁰

If asked what state he hails from
Our sole reply shall be
He hails from Appomattox
And its famous apple tree!

The convention thundered its tribute to Grant; and Conkling, listening to the reverberating cheers, seemed triumphant and inviolable. But silently the ghosts of Grant's discredited administration crept into the hall, and Conkling's moment slipped away from him. He bullied and threatened, he used insolence and cajolery, but he could not revive a sickly past. The old soldiers nominated Garfield and, as a token bow to Conkling, his friend Chester A. Arthur for the Vice-Presidency.

The gesture did not satisfy the boundless conceit of Conkling, and civil war broke out in the party. When President Garfield nominated an enemy to head the New York Customhouse, the Senator, seeing a threat to his political machine, delayed confirmation. Business in the Senate ground to a halt, but the President stood firm. Finally, in May, 1881, while Kate was conferring with lawyers about her divorce, Conkling took a desperate plunge, resigning his Senate seat and making it clear that he would return on one condition — Garfield's capitulation. Chase had made a similar mistake when he resigned from Lincoln's Cabinet, but he salvaged his career because Lincoln's assassin

waited until the President, hoping to put Chase safely out of the political arena, elevated him to the Supreme Court. Conkling was not so fortunate. While he was in Albany negotiating with the state legislators for a vote of confidence, namely re-election to the Senate, a madman shot the President and defended his act by saying simply, "I had no ill will toward the President. His death was a political necessity. . . . I am a Stalwart of the Stalwarts." The Stalwarts were Conkling's followers in the Republican Party, and he along with the murderer stood condemned by the outraged public, repelled by the pettiness that was devastating their government. New York, no longer tolerant of the precious rights of spoilsmen, selected a new Senator. Arthur went to the White House and, turning his back on his customhouse friends, continued on the path of reform begun by Hayes. Like an angry giant, Conkling strode from the national scene and went to New York City to open a law office.¹¹

Kate went to France. She took a little villa on the edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau so that Ethel could attend the fashionable school of Mlle. Dussant. Portia, a child of ten, was put in the care of a governess, but Kate's youngest daughter, her namesake, was beyond education. Kitty's earliest memories were of painful scenes between her father and mother, of sudden midnight departures from Canonchet, of trains and hotel rooms and strangers. She was four when her father first tried to push her mother out of a window at Canonchet. She was less than six when Sprague broke down the nursery door, turning that snug refuge into anarchy. Watching Kitty's clumsy attempts to cope with the confusing world about her, Kate knew that she would never be more than a child, lost in a child's twilight world of dreams. Kitty had found her security: time and change would have no meaning for her.¹²

With Kate gone, William Sprague felt a joyous sense of release. He was a man of pendulous emotions—one instant mired in hopeless despair, the next reckless with overconfidence. From Kate, and from her father, too, he had hoped for too much—an end to his doubts and weaknesses and the triumph of that heroic image of his daydreams.

But his marriage had stultified and emasculated him; and by 1878, in the place of the noble young general, straight as a statue, his shoulders squared with gold braid, Sprague was faced with another portrait of himself—a man prematurely old, his face lined and fleshy, his mouth a thin line of disappointment under his straggly mustache—the picture of dissipation, a failure in society, politics, and business. But with the end of his long, disillusioning attachment to Kate, Sprague's slumbering optimism sprang to life once more. His habitual slouch, his timidity and moodiness were sent sprawling. He was a new man, the indomitable William Sprague who had once galloped through the streets of Washington on a white charger.

He swaggered headlong into a furious quarrel with Zechariah Chafee, the trustee of his estate, and belligerently refused to let the legally appointed receivers manage his property. Finally, at a business meeting in Providence, Chafee's patience came to an end; and, clutching Sprague by the throat, the lame old man beat him soundly with his crutch until astonished spectators dragged them apart. Chafee took his case to court, thereby commencing a long legal battle that would continue until 1902, long after his death, as Sprague contested the trust deed and doggedly fought every sale of what had once been his property.¹³

Three months after his divorce, Sprague learned that Canonchet was to be sold under a sheriff's writ to pay off part of his debts. At one time Chafee might have disposed of the estate without any trouble from Sprague, who had declared publicly during the Conkling affair that Canonchet was Kate's doing and far too large to suit his simple tastes. "This is no home, this great building . . . that requires an army of servants to keep in order,"¹⁴ he had said then. But afterward his feelings underwent a change, and he began to have a possessive fondness for the great shabby mansion, falling into ruins. Its very emptiness pleased him, reminding him that he had driven away Kate's friends, the ubiquitous house guests, all the clever people who had made him feel like an intruder in his own house. At Edgewood, Kate would always be haunted by memories of her father, but Sprague wiped Canonchet clean of all associations save one: that last scene on the

piazza. After having taken possession of his house from the Senator from New York, Sprague was in no mood to hand it over to a mere lawyer.

When the trustee arrived at the gate on the day of the sale, he found a terse announcement in Sprague's handwriting: "No Admittance. Canonchet and grounds are closed to all carriages and persons." The bridge over the pond in front of the house had been destroyed; and Sprague was seen pacing back and forth near the entrance with a rifle on his shoulder. The sun glinted on his fixed bayonet. Under his baleful eye, the auction did not go well. The house, said to have originally cost more than \$600,000, had dropped in value to an estimated \$91,000 because of deflation and deterioration; but the highest bid that afternoon was only \$62,250.

The fact that the auctioneer finally banged his gavel and cried, "Sold!" made no impression on Sprague, who refused to be budged. When a sheriff came to Canonchet to dispossess him, he found the ex-governor sitting on his porch with a shotgun across his knees. The courts rejected a suit to have him removed, and a new trial was ordered. Unconcerned, Sprague surveyed his estate with the air of a permanent resident. When furniture and other movable articles of Canonchet were carried off and auctioned in Providence to pay some of his bills, he managed to redeem many of them himself, including the document signed by Abraham Lincoln making Salmon P. Chase Chief Justice, a document that had a peculiar significance for Sprague.¹⁵ Where he got the money for his purchases no one knew; but his creditors, with reason to suspect the worst, probably concluded that the intractable old warrior had resources about which the courts knew nothing.

Buoyantly, Sprague set about making a new life for himself. On Christmas Day seven months after his divorce, he took a vow of temperance, and three months later he married Inez Weed Calveit, a beautiful, dark-haired divorcee from the mountain country of West Virginia who wore her hair in a soft, loose circle around her head and had full lips and a straight nose, lacking the arrogant tilt that marred Kate's stateliness.

Shortly afterward, Sprague was nominated for governor of Rhode Island by a coalition of Independent Republicans and Democrats. The press of the nation was not enthusiastic about his reappearance on the political scene. "The disintegration of parties in a period of transition like the present is apt to show itself in surprises of this kind," observed one newspaper gloomily. "Mr. Sprague cannot be enrolled in the list of heroes," remarked another. "Gin, jealousy, and an irrational vanity appear to have done much more than any teacher to accomplish his humiliation." "Even the capacity for being wronged is not a recommendation," said a third. "It implies a weakness somewhere. . . ." The *Providence Daily Journal* commented that Sprague was unlikely to get much support in a "well-established community where . . . the distinction between right and wrong has ceased to be a shadowy and wavy line. . . ." But a wise editor in New York did not discount his chances for success. "It has been the fashion of late years to speak of the ex-Governor as half crazy or half witted. But he has flashes of quite uncommon sagacity, and whoever picks him up for a fool is apt to get burned fingers for his pains."¹⁶

The campaign was the bitterest in Rhode Island history. Lustily, Sprague took on all his enemies at once: the Republican Party, the press, Chafee, his creditors, the courts which had ruled against him in his property fight, and the leading families of the state. His political enemies made the most of his shortcomings, reminding the voters of his insulting Senate speeches, his two-sided war record, and his national reputation for drunkenness. It was even said that there was some irregularity in his second marriage.¹⁷ Sprague fought back with all the considerable political tricks that he knew, but he lost the election. He found that his professions of regeneration, his sudden, surprising burst of vitality had not persuaded the electorate that he had really changed. Perhaps he realized that no one, no matter who he might be, can be disinherited of his past.

Kate missed the election furor in Rhode Island. Having more respect than Sprague for the people's memory, she was not anxious to fly back into public life until she was certain that she would be ac-

cepted on her own terms. It was not until she had spent years of seclusion in Europe that she decided to return to the United States, and then she chose the occasion carefully.

Ever since her father's death, Kate had wanted to have his remains moved from Washington to Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati, where the rest of his family was buried; but, for one reason or another, her plans had been postponed. At last in 1886, the bar association, under her urging, made the necessary arrangements.¹⁸ Kate was gratified, knowing that the occasion would be one of great ceremony, with high government officials gathering to do homage to her father's memory and the entire country pausing to honor his life and achievements. Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, Chief Justice of the United States—the bright image would once more be called to life; and Kate Chase, now Mrs. Kate Chase, would be at his side as she had always been during his brilliant career. She would come home from Europe to bury her father and, in the abundance of gratitude due him, to bury forever the ignominy of Sprague and Conkling, scandal and divorce.

Kate dared not stay away much longer, for there would come a time when it would be useless to exhume her father, when it would be impossible to revive old memories and dependencies, a time when she would be forgotten. Was it already too late? She had reason to think not. She no longer had her youthful loveliness, she no longer had money; but she still had her persevering charm, her political astuteness, and her sense of drama.

When Ohioans learned that Kate was going to accompany her father's body to its final burial place, the governor's wife decided to have a party for her while she was in Cincinnati. Mrs. Foraker knew Kate slightly and thought her an extraordinarily fascinating woman; but, as she was to discover, there were Ohioans who disagreed. One was the ex-First Lady Lucy Hayes. "With all her pliancy and sweetness, her air of 'just coming from vespers,' she stiffened like a Roman lady before any taking of liberties with what was known to be Right."

Taking the governor's wife aside, Mrs. Hayes said gently, "My dear, I have just heard that you are to entertain Mrs. [Chase]. Why should

it be *you*? We must not judge her . . . let the Lord do that. But I think . . . in your position . . . to countenance even the appearance of evil is a mistake."

"She spaced her words a little. That was all. She drifted away with a faint rustle of black silk, a faint fragrance of tea rose. We did not speak of it again," recalled Mrs. Foraker.¹⁹

Kate saved herself embarrassment when she declined all social invitations, explaining that she wanted to spend all her time in Ohio with relatives. And, she announced firmly, she planned to return to Washington immediately after the ceremonies.²⁰ She had never shared her father's love for the Ohio Valley, which had obstinately shut its ears to his presidential bids, grumbled about his trade regulations during the war, and even, to some extent, opposed his appointment to the Supreme Court. Ohio, with its narrow strictures and provincial ways! How could she forgive the petty gossip about Dick Nevins and the maddening interest in Roscoe Conkling? No, Kate would come to Cincinnati to bury her father, but she would return to Washington to live.

On the morning of October 14, 1886, an impressive delegation gathered at the Cincinnati railway station to meet the special train bearing Chase's body from Washington. Nettie had quietly arrived in the city earlier with her husband Will and their son Edwyn Chase Hoyt, and she would have remained in the background that morning had not the governor sought her out and brought her forward to join him. Who was the plain woman in black? correspondents asked each other; and, upon satisfying their curiosity, they made a brief note of her presence, of the fact that she had a considerable reputation as a writer of children's books, and then dismissed her. They were already composing their remarks about Kate Chase for the next edition—that she had once been the crown jewel of Columbus society, that she was her father's favorite daughter (they could safely make that assumption, they presumed), that in Washington her wit and beauty had won her a position unsurpassed by any other woman in American history.

At last the train roared into the station, and Kate appeared at the rear door of her private car. For an instant she looked like the Kate

Chase that Ohio knew so well—a slim, beautiful woman with regal manners—but the appraising crowds soon detected a difference. Her hair, her beautiful auburn hair that had always been her pride, was bleached a stunning gold, and her face was flushed with unnatural color; but Kate was forty-six years old, and nothing could disguise the deep lines of sorrow in her face. People strained to see the tall, slender girl of eighteen at her side, hoping to find that she was another Kate; but they turned away with disappointment. Ethel was plain, almost unattractive, having inherited only the single flaw in her mother's appearance—a small, upturned nose.²¹

A few hours later four thousand people crowded into the city's music hall for the public service. Kate took her place on the platform facing the assembly and throughout the long ceremony gazed at her father's casket without moving. She gave no sign that she was aware of the music and speeches or that she heard Governor Foraker conclude his assessment of her father's life and career: "Our country has produced many men of genius and of intellectuality . . . but not since Washington has America produced a great public man the superior of Mr. Chase in the matter of an exemplary private life. . . ." ²²

What could orators say to Kate of her father's private life? To Kate, his pride and love, confidante and adviser, his passionate disciple? She *was* his private life, the one person who had known him better than any other, the expression of all his longings, the fulfillment of his aspirations. Or was she? Was she not instead only one part of his life, the tumultuous, demanding, driving part that had sent a New England country boy to one of the highest positions in the government, almost to the White House itself? Was there not another aspect of her father's life, an element that Governor Foraker mistakenly considered the whole, in which Kate did not belong?

The lessons of Chase's childhood had at last prevailed, putting out the fires in his heart and turning him back again to the standards of his righteous New England forefathers and the strait-laced Cincinnati that he had known and loved as a young man, to the preachments of the Old Testament, Philander Chase, and his pious mother. He and

Kate had become estranged, neither understanding the other or knowing how to bridge the gap between them. Silently, uncomprehendingly, they had struggled, Chase to bring his daughter back to him, to make her "a content Christian woman—not only religious but happy in religion"—to make her believe as he did "that faith in Christ is the only thing on earth really worth having"; Kate to revive his ambition and secure for him that incomparable earthly crown, the Presidency. Both had failed. Kate could not prevent her father from submitting himself privately and publicly to a judgment that was foreign to her; she could not silence his regrets or suppress Warden's verdict. Just as Chase could never make Kate understand the ties that drew him away from the life they had had together, so he failed to convey to her the essence of the change in himself. To his sorrow he saw that Kate would not change, and he must have known then that she, too, would have to pay a price for his shortcomings, for his overweening, costly worship of himself.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. . . .

There was no resurrection. Kate came back to the capital, alone as she had been when she left for Europe four years before. She found that Washington had changed. It was growing, impressing blocks of red-brick houses and neat avenues on the countryside. That invasion of brick and stone threatened her view of the Capitol dome and the Potomac and the hazy green line of the Virginia shore, but far more disturbing to her was the realization that the Capitol no longer looked back upon Edgewood. There had been many new administrations since she was the icy queen of society, many elections. New powers had strode upon the scene, and new issues were being debated. The war, its heroes, and its belles were being pushed aside. The city that she had once ruled had all but forgotten her.

Kate had reigned in the actuality of balls and receptions, formal dinners and political conferences. When she retired from them, the honors

reverted to their legal claimants; and the fact that she had once put Mrs. Lincoln and even Mrs. Grant in the shadows was of no consequence. Realizing that honor is fugitive from those who have no title, Kate had tried to make her father President and herself the hostess of the White House. But when she failed in that hope and succeeded so well in achieving the pinnacle of actual power, she seemed to forget that one who challenges position must always be wary, that any unwonted presumption would bring an end to provisional honors. She became possessed of the conviction that she led Washington society, not because of youth, wealth, beauty and vitality—a transitory magic allowing her to surpass what was her due—but because of some unique, indestructible quality of will. Kate lost sight of the fact that she dominated the capital with a combination of qualities dependent upon each other and their setting for their brilliance and, above all, dependent upon a restraint and discipline that only her father could inspire. With his death, the entity was broken; and Kate could not be (or was not willing to be) what society demanded in return for fame and power. Having already lost the pinnacle, Kate put an end to what prestige and influence were left her by her affair with Conkling.

She was left with few friends, most of them loyal out of respect for her father rather than regard for her. Kate had often had a use for people, but rarely any affection. People had respected her judgment on matters of partisan politics and enjoyed her parties; they had been flattered by her attention, but, knowing it was contingent upon her needs of the moment, they had had reservations. They admired Kate without liking or trusting her; and when the time came, they found it was easy to forget her. She was like a celluloid doll that had caught fire, burned brilliantly for an instant, and then vanished, leaving behind no trace. Within a few years the people who had once praised her as a brilliant conversationalist could not remember anything that she had said.

Kate stayed in Washington only a short time before she returned to Europe, this time leaving Portia and Ethel behind to finish their schooling in America. In less than a year she was forced to return, having purchased the last measure of postponement with the art treasures

she had bought with Sprague's money. Now that they were almost gone, she had no choice but to return to Edgewood, isolated and barren, a house falling into ruins.²³

Before Kate arrived in New York, Ethel announced to the press that she had decided to become an actress.

Did her mother approve of her decision? asked reporters in surprise.

"Oh, yes," said Ethel brightly. "She makes no objection. She sees that I am determined, and she has not at any time absolutely tried to dissuade me from my purpose."²⁴

What could Kate say? In a sense, she had herself to blame that Ethel chose a career that was not considered proper for a young woman of her social standing. Kate, too, had been intrigued by the theater and occasionally had played a part in an amateur production.²⁵ And, fundamentally, she had always been an actress, a prima donna whose stage was political society. Ethel emulated her, but with a characteristic distortion, casting off Kate's concern with social position just as readily as Kate had discarded her father's idealism.

After a year of schooling in New York, Ethel joined Richard Mansfield's troupe as a character actress; but, lacking her mother's singleness of purpose, she gave up the theater after a few seasons to marry a poor, young doctor. Only then would Kate feel the sting of real disappointment in her daughter. She had hoped that Ethel would make a name for herself.²⁶

Kate had not been back at Edgewood long before she had an unexpected visitor, a slight young man with a dark complexion, black hair and mustache, and sullen brown eyes. It was Willie — the image of his father thirty years before.²⁷ Kate was allowed little joy at her son's homecoming, for by then there was nothing she could do for him.

When Sprague had married Mrs. Inez Weed Calveit, she had brought her two beautiful young sisters with her to live at Canonchet. Avis, a lovely brunette in her teens, seemed to strike the ex-governor's fancy, and an unusual bond of intimacy sprang up between them. One spring morning while Kate was in Europe, Avis and Sprague's son Willie drove over to Kingston Hill and were married. Within a very few

months his bride gave birth to a child. Willie was beset by a sudden bitterness, and shortly afterward he left his father's home and deserted his family for an aimless life of odd jobs, working as a railroad fireman, driver of a milk wagon, and photoengraver, before coming to Edgewood to get help from his mother. By then his wife had divorced him and married a Colonel Wheaton, a wealthy oil magnate who had been living with the Spragues for years as a friend of the family. Of course, the newlyweds stayed on at Canonchet.²⁸

Kate managed to get Willie a job in a government department; but before long, he grew restless and disappeared again, drifting west to Chicago for a few weeks and then on to the West Coast. In less than a month he committed suicide in a cheap boardinghouse in Seattle.

Among the books and papers heaped beside his bed were found two letters. One, dated simply September, 1890, was addressed to his sister, telling her that he had gone back to the trade of photoengraving. The other, written in the same steady hand on small, blue-ruled notebook paper, had no dateline. "Dear Father," it began, "I sent you a postal upon the eve of my departure as an item of news, as I imagine that news is pretty scarce down there — not that you [don't] have your little diversions and slight sensations in the matrimonial line, for instance, but then one always likes to hear from former friends and acquaintances. Not that you have given me any encouragement to spring my scintillations of wit and humor upon you. Oh, no — quite the contrary. . . . Your letter was one of those cold and chilling communications that pass between men when one gets a bill of goods charged for more than is shown in the invoice. . . . With my sensitive and highly considerate nature, I cannot conceive how a man can so ruthlessly knock a man down, gouge his eye and otherwise figuratively abuse him, with so little, or, in fact, no cause. But it really matters little, except to my feelings, and they are practically of no use, except to myself."

Willie described his stay in Chicago, saying that while there he had become attached to Holmes, a friend of his father's, "the only fellow I ever met who possessed the faculty of making me see life in anything but a dark and gloomy aspect. He absolutely made me enjoy myself.

... He has been what a dear and devoted wife would have been to another man. To be sure, he neither sewed on my buttons nor called me 'sweetie' nor 'tootsy wootsy,' but the moral effect was there."

Abruptly the boy gave up his attempts at humor. He was desperately lonely in Seattle, he said. "I cannot tell how I long for love and affection, that I never experienced, and cannot describe, yet long for . . ." The letter stopped in midsentence.²⁹

Autumn always came to Kate like a monument to her failures. She had married Sprague in the late fall of 1863, and in the fall she had returned to Edgewood after leaving Canonchet for the last time. In October she had buried her father in Ohio, and now, four years later, she returned to Narragansett Pier to bury her son.

The little chapel, called St. Peter's-by-the-Sea, was filled to capacity, mostly with strangers who had come out of curiosity; but even they could not fail to be moved by the strange climax of Willie Sprague's short life. He had been born amid great splendor, with all the advantages of wealth and position; but twenty-five years later he ended his life without a home, without friends, without a family. Behind him he left little but ambiguities. The wife of his father was not his mother: another woman had taken her place. His former wife was not his widow: another man had taken his place. And even his child was probably not his child but that of another man, possibly his father. Young Willie had been displaced long before his death; his suicide was but a recognition of a fact already established. In that act he seemed to accept and fulfill an obligation of violence laid upon him by his fathers. His grandfather had died the victim of a violent murder at the hands of one of his many enemies; in a sense, his father had already committed a slow suicide of timidity and erratic daring, of dissipation and scandal. Young William Sprague was free of scandal at last. The newspapers would publish his last letters, recount the details of his stormy childhood and sudden marriage, hint at the mystery surrounding the birth of his child: all without his knowledge.³⁰

Willie's funeral brought Kate and Sprague together for the first time since their divorce, but sorrow did not close the gulf between them.

Surrounded by relatives and legal advisers, they sat on opposite sides of the aisle, exchanging no word or look of recognition. In front of them on the casket was a magnificent floral arrangement, an anchor with the word *HEREAFTER* traced on the bar with purple immortelles. The attached card read: "With the unfaltering devotion of his mother." The minister, using Kate's floral tribute as his theme, interpreted it as a token representing the safe harbor that Willie had sought and was to find in death. There was a darker symbolism in that tribute that escaped the cleric, but seemed to weigh heavily upon Kate. The *HEREAFTER* was her promise of devotion, given too late to cold hands. In her mind Kate could see the long line of well-mannered, well-paid, competent people she had engaged to provide Willie with tutoring and companionship, the purchased examples, the endless succession of well-meaning Lincks who had taught Willie to write in a small disciplined hand: "I cannot tell how I long for love and affection, that I never experienced, and cannot describe, yet long for . . ."

What thoughts went through Sprague's mind during the ceremony? "Your letter was one of those cold and chilling communications that pass between men when one gets a bill of goods charged for more than is shown in the invoice," his son had said. ". . . not that you [don't] have your little diversions and slight sensations in the matrimonial line, for instance. . . ."

Mercifully, the service was short. Kate, pale as death, started to leave the chapel; but she was overcome with emotion and would have fallen had a bystander not steadied her. Helped to a seat, she leaned her head on the shoulder of one of her old servants from Canonchet and gave way to her grief, weeping openly like a child. The spectators turned away, ashamed and embarrassed. They pitied her.⁸¹

All Kate had left were her three daughters. Besides her children, she had loved only two people: her father and Roscoe Conkling; and by 1890, both were dead. Kate knew little of the last nine years of Conkling's life; for after the calamitous summer of 1879, the chasm between them had widened from cautious indifference to complete separation, each going his own way, Kate to Europe and Conkling to New

York. Kate eventually returned to Washington, but the ex-Senator never did. At the peak of his power in the Senate, he turned down Grant's offer of the Chief Justiceship; and, at the nadir of his fortunes after Garfield's death, he turned down President Arthur's offer of a place on the court. Some took his second refusal as a warning that he had not retired from politics, but they were wrong. Once rejected by his party, he was not to be conciliated. When asked to take part in the presidential campaign of his enemy James G. Blaine, he snapped, "Gentlemen, you have been misinformed. I have given up criminal law." As a political wiseacre once remarked, "[Conkling] had not only the courage of his convictions, but, that rarer quality among public men, the courage of his contempt."³²

After a few polite visits to his wife in Utica, Conkling gave up all pretense of living there and bought a home in New York City. His law practice prospered, and he made friends, joining exclusive men's clubs where he could enjoy masculine company without the tribulations of that most exclusive club, the Senate. When he awoke on that fateful morning in March, 1888, he undoubtedly felt well satisfied with himself. It was a beautiful day, warm and balmy with a smell of spring in the air; but after midnight the spring rain turned to snow, and the temperature plummeted to a surprising low. In a few hours more snow fell on the city than had fallen during the entire winter, and the next morning Conkling went to his office through a city frozen and immobile. At five, disdaining a carriage, he started walking home through the deserted streets; but in three hours he covered only three miles. Turning into the New York Club, he fell flat on his face. In a few weeks he was dead, a casualty of the same overbearing male vanity that had opened his political career, animated its supreme moments—those fulsome, rich-toned performances, both sartorial and rhetorical—and finally brought about his downfall, his fall from grace at Canonchet and his fall from power at Albany.³³

Unfortunately for Kate, she did not die. Long after everything she valued was gone, she endured, existing in a desert of time, a flat horizon of endless afternoons, empty and silent, stretching on and on toward nothing. Still, there was no peace for her. When she had grown

accustomed to death and scandal and loneliness, she found herself harassed by a final ironic trial—bankruptcy. In the years since her break with Sprague, she had sold everything that would bring a price, even a part of the land surrounding Edgewood. Defiantly she had let the money slip through her hands; and when there was none left, she ran up bills and borrowed money and mortgaged her house. Four years after Willie's death she had accumulated a forty-thousand-dollar mortgage on Edgewood, and she had come to the end of her credit. Her creditors began clamoring for an auction of her furniture to pay some of her bills, and several times Edgewood was listed for sale to pay taxes. Now Kate had no Senator to come to her aid, not even a friend. After Willie's death, she had refused to have anything to do with her ex-husband; but even if she had been willing to go to the courts to secure alimony, she knew that the effort would be useless, for by then Sprague was living on borrowed money and the charity of his relatives.³⁴

There seemed to be only one way that she could help herself. Publishers and editors came to her suggesting that she write her memoirs. ". . . her history would in part be a history of the Civil War," they told each other.³⁵ And afterward, during the turbulent decades of reconstruction, she had been at the height of her power, playing a part in the major turning points of the country's history. What ghosts she could call forth!—her father, Abraham Lincoln, Seward, Gideon Welles, the secretive Mr. Stanton; the fiery abolitionists, politicians, and financiers; Hiram Barney and Jay Cooke; the soldiers—Hooker, Burnside and Butler, McClellan, Pope and Garfield, Sherman and Grant. She could re-create an era—the parties, the gossip, the struggles for power—the dark, elusive matrix of politics and government. She could answer the riddles of her father's career—his dealings with Cooke, his relations with Lincoln, the Pomeroy circular, the Blair attacks. She could unlock events—the impeachment of Andrew Johnson, the Democratic convention of 1868, the spectacular Senate speeches of her husband, the disputed election of 1876. She could, if she wished, take the public behind the closed doors of the house at Sixth and E streets, past the front parlor and the formal dining room

to its library, private sitting rooms, its bedrooms. It was within her power to sweep away her father's reserve and her husband's. What lay behind the failure of her marriage? What caused the quarrels and the drinking and the long trips abroad? How much did her father know about her and Sprague? What did he know about the Texas Adventure? And what of Roscoe Conkling?

Why should she not answer these questions, or at least part of them? Everyone was writing memoirs and publishing letters and diaries. Grant and John Sherman had produced their histories. Seward's papers had been published by his son; Conkling's, by his nephew. Lincoln's life had been examined by a host of writers; and two biographies of her father had already appeared. Maunsell B. Field had immortalized his sycophancy. Social leaders had laid aside their appointment books and taken up manuscripts, and even Kate's sister Nettie had produced two articles about her father for a New York newspaper.³⁶ Why should not Kate? She knew more than most of the others and could express herself with force and distinction. Even if she pulled back the veil a little way, even if she succeeded in conveying only a small part of her own fascination, her book would be a sensation. And she would make a great deal of money.

But Kate refused. It was her duty to speak out, editors argued. She owed a debt to future generations, to history. She did not even reply. How could she make them understand that she had no part in the present or the future, that she could acknowledge no obligation except to the past? In the age of the skyscraper and Standard Oil and labor unions, Kate was an anachronism, along with the crinoline and bustle, the barouche and gaslights, the war and reconstruction. She belonged to the dead, and their secrets would be safe with her. She would tell nothing.³⁷

As she sat in the front parlor of Edgewood, Kate herself seemed dead, oblivious of her bills, of the men who came to carry away the last pieces of valuable furniture and the lawyers who brought papers to be signed. She no longer cared. With Willie's death her will was broken, that exuberant, inflexible will that had taken the place of a heart. Giving herself up to the melancholy that had haunted her since the loss of her father, she deliberately let her house fall into ruins, as if only its

complete desolation would suit her, as if its dingy halls and barren rooms were a penalty for all her failures, for the disappointments she had suffered and the grief she had caused her father. In the final years of his life Edgewood had been her father's mainstay and consolation, the object of his creativity and hope, his fortress against death. To Kate it was her punishment, and her stronghold against life. There she remained, alone with a housekeeper and feeble-minded Kitty. Portia, finding life with her mother intolerable, had been reconciled with Sprague and had gone to Rhode Island to live with relatives. By then Ethel, living in Brooklyn, had a son, named after Chase, and, being preoccupied with her own family, rarely came to Washington.³⁸

In the summer of 1895, Kate's creditors, at the end of their patience, ordered her to vacate Edgewood. Shocked out of her apathy, she persuaded them to allow her a little more time and, finding a temporary home for Kitty, went to Ohio, hoping to raise enough money to establish the house as a national shrine to her father's memory. She was received kindly by many influential people, including the rising governor William McKinley, who had been a freshman in Congress at the time she and Conkling conspired to make a President; but despite the courtesy Kate soon realized that her mission was doomed to failure. Another depression was running its ugly course, causing mass unemployment, labor unrest, and widespread hunger. Kate was only one of millions who were suffering. A state that produced the leader of Coxey's army had little money to spare for national memorials.³⁹

She went on to New York, hoping to enlist the help of some of the country's financial leaders who had known her father. The newspapers represented her mission as an attempt to obtain charity; but Kate denied the reports and, her voice ringing with brittle optimism, talked of her plans to restore Edgewood, replace its rotting timbers, repaint its interiors and cultivate its lawns and gardens.⁴⁰

His curiosity aroused by Kate's proposal, a Washington reporter went out to look at Edgewood. About a quarter of a mile beyond Catholic University, he caught a glimpse of the mansion on a hill, hidden from the encroaching city by a wild profusion of honeysuckle. Walking up on the front porch, he brushed aside matted spider webs,

pushed open the front door, and stepped inside. "A banquet hall deserted," he thought as he wandered through the empty, shabby rooms. The house was filthy, littered with refuse and rotting furniture, its windows coated with dirt, some cracked or broken. In the library were some dusty chairs and tables piled in a corner and on a beautifully carved mantel the famous marble bust of Chase that Kate loved so much. Stepping over the debris, the reporter went on into the dining room. Standing there, waiting for his eyes to become accustomed to the dim, unnatural light that sifted through the shuttered windows, he heard the eerie sound of the wind blowing through the mass of vines that had grown up over the porch outside. In front of him, hanging over the fireplace, was a large empty frame, richly carved with figures and burnished by the afternoon light. Staring at it, the reporter was engulfed in a flood of memories, recalling when that house had been Chase's pride, its dining room renowned for the most celebrated dinner parties in Washington, its green lawns bordered by flowers, its driveway crowded with carriages. He could remember when Grant had come calling, and Sumner and Sherman and Jay Cooke and all the others. And he could remember when Roscoe Conkling, mighty Roscoe Conkling, had come there to pay court. The decline of Edgewood would make a good feature article, he knew, but he was not looking forward to writing it. It was with sadness and a vague sense of shame that he carefully shut the door of that historic old house and went down into the brightly lit, forgetful city.⁴¹

In New York City Kate talked on, feigning an assurance she did not feel. Men like Henry Villard nodded encouragingly, sensitive to her pride. Villard, now a leading financier, had met the Chases during the war when he had come to Washington as a young newspaperman. After calling on Kate, he wrote his wife: ". . . it gave me quite a shock at first to be received by an aged woman with hardly any traces of her former beauty. But she is still very intelligent, vivacious and determined as of old and very ladylike withal. You would feel interested at once in her I am sure." Mrs. Villard was interested, remembering vividly her first glimpse of Kate. It was 1866 once again, and she was a young New England bride attending her first official ball in the capi-

tal. She stared wide-eyed at the brilliant spectacle: diplomats in court costume, officers in dress uniforms, and beautiful women, their crinoline gowns like flowers in full bloom. Kate, exquisite, incomparable Kate, was the center of attention; and even General Grant, awkward and embarrassed, consented to dance with her. Never before had she seen such a brilliant woman, thought Mrs. Villard, a woman whose perfection could never be marred.⁴²

When her husband suggested they invite Kate to their home at Dobbs Ferry, she agreed warmly, happy to be able to do something to ease the poor woman's difficult situation. Nothing her husband said beforehand could have prepared Mrs. Villard for that meeting. Stunned, dumfounded, she wrote afterward: "Mrs. Kate Chase looks like a wreck of her former self. False blonde hair, powder and paint and weary, half-closed eyes. . . ." ⁴³ This was bewitching Kate, the woman who thirty years before had won Washington's cold, calculating heart. Gone were the youthful radiance, the smoldering animation, the slim, graceful figure. There was still the familiar posture, imperious and demanding, but it no longer seemed stately. No, now Kate appeared vulgar and hard, an old woman with a double chin, red, puffy eyes, and frizzled blond curls. At fifty-five her face was a portrait of her life, a lifetime of dissatisfaction. She was ugly.

Seeing the incredulity in Mrs. Villard's eyes, Kate apologized for her appearance, saying that she had been on the coast of Maine and had found that the air did not agree with her. Mrs. Villard knew that the salt that had scalded Kate's eyes was not in the sea air.⁴⁴

Moved by Kate's plight, Senator Price and Representative Borg of Ohio each contributed five thousand dollars toward the redemption of Edgewood; and with the help of others — Collis P. Huntington, a railroad magnate, Seth Low, president of Columbia University, Levi P. Morton, and J. P. Morgan — a fund of almost fifty thousand dollars was raised, enough to pay off the mortgage on Edgewood and cancel some of Kate's other debts. The contributors said that they eventually planned to sell Edgewood, deducting what they had advanced Kate and turning the remainder over to her;⁴⁵ but few people took the announcement seriously. It was suspected that Kate's friends were merely

trying to save her the embarrassment of publicly accepting charity.

Kate returned to Edgewood to live, but the house was not restored, nor was it made into a national memorial to her father. There was little money left in the trust fund when her debts were paid; and, exhausted by her trips to Ohio and New York, she could no longer keep up false pretenses. As interest in her and her problems waned, she and her daughter Kitty were left in merciful isolation. There were few callers, and in the afternoon the only sound from the old house was the thud of one of Kate's dogs dropping on the porch for a nap.

Life was hard. Kate tried to make a living by farming; but she who had known all the subtle artifices of politics could not make anything grow. For a while she raised chickens and ran a little store in a suburb of Washington, where she tried to sell vegetables. At times she was seen driving a shabby carriage through the streets of the city on her way to deliver eggs. Few people recognized the faded old woman, dressed in finely cut clothes, dusty, worn, out of style.⁴⁶ Occasionally a neighboring coal dealer came to her aid with a donation of food or fuel. Still she could not manage.

In May, 1899, when it was plain that she would have to have more help or starve, her case was brought to the attention of the Secretary of the Treasury. Out of respect for her father, he arranged for her to take a clerkship in his department; but she was never able to accept the position.⁴⁷ Weakened by bad food and hard work, she began to suffer serious attacks of illness affecting her liver and kidneys. She refused medical care until it was too late; and on the last day of July, 1899, thirteen days before her fifty-ninth birthday, she was dead.

Her casket was placed beneath her father's marble bust in the library during the short funeral service held in the long central hallway of Edgewood. The doors at the front and back of the hall were thrown open; and the few mourners — Kate's three daughters, a few relatives and friends — felt the dry winds of summer, carrying the fragrance of fields and lawn, blow across their faces. Kate was buried in Glenwood Cemetery nearby, where William Sprague had once camped with the high-spirited dandies of the First Rhode Island Regiment. Eventually

the United States Government provided a special railway car to carry her remains to Cincinnati for the final interment at the side of her father.⁴⁸

Newspapers throughout the country, devoting a column or two to the enigmatic story of her life, paid tribute to her shrewdness, her beauty and charm, and called her an American queen. "Probably no woman in American history has had as brilliant a social career as Mrs. Kate Chase," they said. "Even the achievements of Dolly Madison pale into insignificance compared with her successes. Dolly Madison had the prestige of being the wife of the President to aid her. Kate Chase won her way by her beauty and her talents. . . . Her power was without precedent . . . and it has never been equaled since, even by those who have lived in the White House. . . . It is safe to say that no woman in the history of the country ever received the flattery and adulation that came to her." "It was a career filled with romance; a career of political influence, unequalled by any other American woman; a career of unprecedented splendor followed by bitter disappointment and closing in neglect and poverty."⁴⁹

The press acknowledged her tragedy but did not probe it deeply, being content to provide the facts and leave the questions to others. Newspapers have solved the problems of existence by division, seeing life as a series of columns, isolated from each other by a typographer's bar — failure and triumph, comedy and pathos standing side by side without impinging one upon another. Rhode Island was anticipating the spectacular sailing race between the *Defender* and the *Vigilant*. Narragansett Pier was enjoying the zenith of the summer season. John Hay was Secretary of State. Kate Chase was dead.

And so she passed from the national scene — Kate Chase, daughter of one of the foremost political leaders of the country, a woman blessed with social position and power, with wealth, education, beauty, and talent. Rarely had there been anyone so richly endowed by nature and heritage, and yet there had been some mysterious flaw in her perfection, something that strained out of bounds, making even her love an enormity. She died with the bright promise broken, her father's house in ruins, her children rendering harsh judgment upon her. One com-

mitted suicide, one defied convention to go on the stage, one deserted her, one was feeble-minded: that was Kate's issue.

How different had been Chase's dreams! Once years before he had written what was, in a sense, his preface to Kate's biography, expressing in a dedication of the family album his hopes for her.⁵⁰

For Kate

May no harsh line, — no sinful trace
The leaves of this fair book deface,

.

May, in thy life, dear child, appear
More than the graces imagined here,
Faith, Hope and Love over all preside,
Make Heaven of Earth, and Heavenward guide.
Father.

Epilogue

WILLIAM SPRAGUE seemed unmoved by Kate's death. He and his second wife made occasional trips abroad, and when he returned to the United States, he was greeted by reporters, respectful of his opinions on world affairs. Mr. Sprague answered their questions judiciously, and his words appeared in the *New York Tribune*.¹ When a prospective biographer of the Chase family wrote asking him for pictures of his family, he spoke equally judiciously, referring to the children as Kate's. "When Kate left here, 1879 I think it was, she took all her pictures with her. Her youngest daughter Portia Chase Sprague is at Washington, D. C. . . . Ethel the elder is at a sanatorium in Washington. Dr. Donaldson of Baltimore [Ethel's husband] is dead." (Kitty died shortly after Kate.)

He reminisced about the Republican convention of 1860, a turning point of history that had had an incalculable effect on his own life. Chase might have had the presidential nomination then had Lincoln been willing to accept the Vice-Presidency, said Sprague. "His wife declined saying: 'He takes first place or none.'" As Sprague knew, that ultimatum might have been delivered by Kate, speaking for her father. Had Chase, instead of Lincoln, been nominated and elected in 1860, Kate probably would have been satisfied to do without the Boy Governor and his twenty-five million dollars. Perhaps that thought was in Sprague's mind when he said, "Thus, straws turn great occasions."²

Sprague delivered his judgments on history from Canonchet, which he had succeeded in wresting from his creditors by livelier methods than his ex-wife had used to save Edgewood. With his celebrated shotgun he managed to keep marauding officers of the law off the premises until the rightful owner died. His widow appealed to the courts; but

by the time her claim was validated, she, too, was dead. Giving in to Sprague's lawless obstinacy with surprisingly good grace, she quit-claimed the house to him in her will; and upon her death, he became the undisputed owner.³

Kate's management of Canonchet — her choice of paintings and furnishings and friends — had never suited Sprague, and he and his wife decided to revise everything to their own taste. Once again there was seen the familiar line of painters, plasterers, and bricklayers going and coming from the house; and when they finished their work, Kate would not have recognized the house that she had built. Inez and Sprague had revolutionized Canonchet, sweeping away its restrained, somber decorations, flooding its solid, dignified interiors with light and color. The grand ballroom was transformed into a music room, lavishly decorated with murals of nude female figures, bearing such titles as *Venus Taking a Sun Bath* and *Juno*. The walls of Inez's boudoir were covered with allegorical paintings, the ceiling was adorned with *Love Awake* and *Love Asleep*, and the area above the bay window was crowded with fat little cupids. Her bathroom was painted pink and blue to represent an ocean scene at sunset. On the second floor the hallway, ninety feet long, boasted an artificial cascade, complete with rocks, water plants, and a stream of water that ran ten feet deep.⁴

Not long after the alterations were completed, Sprague, by then almost eighty years old, found winter at the Pier burdensome, and he and his wife began spending a great deal of time in Providence. Eventually he was persuaded to sell Canonchet to his sister-in-law Avis, who had married Wenceslaw Borda, a wealthy diplomat, upon the death of her second husband, the man who probably provided the money for the renovation of the house. Sprague agreed to the sale on the condition that he be given the right to reside there as long as he wanted. The Bordas, who planned to spend only half of the year at Canonchet, agreed, glad to have the Spragues share the immense house with them.

On Sunday night, October 10, 1909, Sprague and Inez completed their preparations for welcoming the new owners to Canonchet. Before going to bed, Sprague ordered fires built in many of the fireplaces which had not been in use since the previous winter. At 2:40 the next

morning someone was aroused by smoke and the crackling of flames. Canonchet was on fire. The alarm swept through the house, and in a few minutes panic-stricken relatives, guests, and servants were running down the halls in their nightclothes. Someone was dispatched to the Pier to sound the fire alarm; and the rest, their faces streaked with sweat and soot, worked frantically to save some of the furnishings. By the time the small fire engine arrived from town, the roof was ablaze, and the heat had driven the occupants outside, where they stood, a line of ghostly silhouettes, hypnotized by the flames. Nearby villages, Peace Dale and Wakefield, were called upon for help, but even their modern automobile-drawn equipment could do nothing.

Sprague watched the pride of his life being consumed. Canonchet, his Canonchet, the house that he had rescued from Kate and Conkling and Chafee, from creditors and courts, sheriffs and lawyers. Everything — the historic guest rooms, the celebrated piazza, the splendid music room, the statuary and paintings, thousands of relics of the war — everything was going up in smoke.

Suddenly William Sprague was seized by an impulse. Irresistibly he was drawn toward the flaming mansion, as if his action were a reflex, the same reflex that had drawn him toward enemy fire at Blackburn Ford and had driven him to make his suicidal Senate speeches. He was old and enfeebled; but he was still William Sprague, predictably unpredictable, subject to peculiar flashes of rash, impatient courage, misdirected gestures, futile and self-destructive. The old man strode into the burning house to salvage something.

His horrified family and friends waited. The fire roared, and flames blackened the sky. Finally Inez begged Michael Allan, the family coachman, to go in after her husband. Without hesitation Allan ran toward the house and was engulfed in the clouds of black smoke pouring out of the first floor. Coughing and choking, he fought his way up to the second-floor hallway, but there he was stopped in his tracks by a solid wall of heat. Over the roar of the fire, he heard Inez's artificial cascade, still bubbling serenely along the rocks. Staggering to the water, he plunged in some rags and wound them around his head. Then, dodging the flaming debris, he raced to the top floor. There, crumpled on

the floor, he found William Sprague, overcome by smoke. Gathering the unconscious old man in his arms, the coachman turned and blindly reeled down the stairs, across the flaming hallway, down another stairway. As he appeared in the front doorway, the fire reached the height of its fury. In a short while it was over, leaving the house a smoldering ruin of charred beams and twisted metal. Canonchet would never have a new owner.⁵

Sprague had to be content to live out his final days in Paris with his faithful wife Inez. Contrary to his opinions about Europe delivered to the Senate forty-five years before, he had come to think of Paris as the only civilized place in the world to live. He spent his time reminiscing about the war, describing the battles in which he had taken part and delivering endless judgments on the strategy that had brought about the victory of the North. The Altoona meeting of war governors in the autumn of 1862 was the crucial turning point of the war, he insisted vigorously, and he wrote an article to prove his point; but, unfortunately, his manuscript was destroyed when Canonchet burned. His listeners may have wondered briefly why that single event, a half-forgotten, relatively obscure incident, stuck in Sprague's mind as the high point of the war. It was true that the governors had met at a crucial time: McClellan had turned back Lee's first invasion of the North and the President had just issued the Emancipation Proclamation. But how could Sprague insist, as he did time after time, that a handful of politicians meeting in an insignificant Pennsylvania town had turned the tide against the South? Perhaps his memory was playing tricks on him. The Altoona conference had been important, had, indeed, been a turning point; but its significance was more personal than national. William Sprague had attended the meeting as a loyal governor of a Northern state; he had returned to Washington to commit himself irretrievably to the Texas Adventure.⁶

In 1914, when Paris was threatened with German occupation, Sprague decided to flee the city with his wife. Encountering a German air attack on the road several miles outside Paris, he climbed out of his car to tie an American flag on the top. This vivid, unequivocal gesture is the last glimpse of the ex-governor, ex-Senator, ex-traitor. The follow-

ing year on September 11, 1915, one day short of his eighty-fifth birthday, William Sprague was dead.⁷

The American public was absorbed in the world series between the Philadelphia Phillies and the Red Sox, in the novel moving picture called *The Birth of a Nation*, the latest automobiles, and the problem of relations with Germany after the sinking of the *Lusitania*. When news flashed from Europe that the last of the Civil War governors had died, the country was momentarily shocked, not that Sprague was dead but that he had lived so long.⁸

Sprague probably would not have minded that his obituaries were short and often inaccurate, written by men who did not remember him. But surely he regretted missing the last great review of the Grand Army of the Republic, staged a few days after his death. Twenty thousand strong, the loyal Union veterans marched before President Wilson in commemoration of fifty years of peace between the North and South.⁹ How Sprague would have liked to have been there, riding a white charger at the head of the Rhode Island troops, the yellow plume of his hat streaming out behind him, a slim young girl and her father waiting for him in the shadows.

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Notes

CHAPTER ONE: *Ambition's Mistress*

1. William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, p. 23. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 August 1899. Statement of Mrs. Charles H. Walker, who lived with the Chases at the time. Although recorded long after the fact and thus subject to inaccuracy, the statement faithfully reflects Kate Chase's relationship with Mrs. Lincoln.

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3. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, I, p. 161.

4. Mary Simmerson Cunningham Logan, *Reminiscences of a Soldier's Wife*, pp. 213, 300. Burton J. Hendrick, *Lincoln's War Cabinet*, p. 376. Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 23. Russell describes the state dinner and the participants at great length.

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7. Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-6, 51.

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- Kate Chase: *Dominant Daughter*, p. 8. Mary Smith Lockwood, *Historic Homes in Washington*, p. 37.
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 14. *Ibid.*, p. 186. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-1. Clara Longworth Chambrun, *The Making of Nicholas Longworth*, p. 91.
 15. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-2, 96, quoting Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-6.
 16. *Eclectic Magazine*, September 1873, pp. 373-4. Joseph Benson Foraker, *Notes of a Busy Life*, II, p. 502. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-7.
 17. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-90.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
 20. LC, Chase MSS, Family Notes and Memoranda.
 21. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
 22. LC, Chase MSS, Family Notes and Memoranda. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 290-1.
 23. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
 24. *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 68-78. Julia Rosa Newberry, *Julia Newberry's Diary*, pp. 32-6.
 25. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 377. Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 71, 79.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
 27. *New York Tribune*, 15 February 1891.
 28. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 31. LC, Chase MSS, Family Notes and Memoranda.
 29. *Ibid.* Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
 30. *New York Tribune*, 15 February 1891. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-9.
 31. Foraker, *op. cit.*, II, p. 507. Edward Lillie Pierce, *Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner*, III, pp. 168, 212. Herbert Agar, *The Price of Union*, pp. 324-5.
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26. HSP, Cooke MSS, S. P. Chase to Jay Cooke, 7 March 1862.
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37. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 12, 14.
38. *Ibid.*, Part 3, p. 26.
39. *Ibid.*, Part 3, pp. 3, 6. Caught off guard by his sudden dismissal, Reynolds was unable to balance his books. Eventually Chase reported to Congress that his agent had served without compensation other than army pay to clear \$501,000. Reynolds's own report showed that he had originally cleared over \$550,000 in the project. He had expected to get part of the proceeds for his services, but apparently he was willing to forego his five-per-cent commission to settle the ten-per-cent discrepancy in his accounts. For full particulars on the Reynolds operation in South Carolina see: Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 391-2, 396, 424. ORA I, 6, pp. 200-1. Pierce, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 82. *Official Report of E. L. Pierce*, Report No. 1, 3 February 1862; Report No. 2, 2 June 1862. United States Archives, Treasury Records Division, *Port Royal Correspondence, 1861-2*, pp. 10, 40, 52, 101, 141, 167; *Collector of the Port of New York*, Incoming Correspondence, No. 16, pp. 126, 205,

489; *Restricted Commercial Intercourse* No. 1, pp. 311-4, No. 2, pp. 39-40, 138-9 (S. P. Chase to Wm. Reynolds, 18 June, 5, 13 August 1862).

40. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 3, 20. *Providence Journal*, 7 November 1870.

41. *Ibid.* SED 10, Part 3, pp. 20-4. *New York Times*, 2 August 1863. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Volume 17, pp. 230-1. (Cited hereafter as ORN I, 17, pp. 230-1.)

42. John A. Logan, *The Great Conspiracy: Its Origin and History*, pp. 441-2.

43. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 493, 497-8. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 165-6.

44. LC, Chase MSS, William Sprague to S. P. Chase, 14 October 1862; William Reynolds to S. P. Chase, 17 October 1862.

45. SED 10, Part 3, p. 25; Part 4, p. 2.

46. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase, 24 October 1862.

47. The word *treason* as used in this book is defined in accordance with the Constitution and the usages of American jurisprudence. Thus, regardless of motive, a person who knowingly trades with an agent of an enemy of the United States commits an act of treason.

48. United States Navy Department, *Official Report of the Secretary of the Navy to the Congress of the United States, 1863*, p. 1, SED 10, Part 4, p. 1.

49. United States Navy Department, *Official Report of the Secretary of the Navy to the Congress of the United States, 1862*, pp. 3-4.

50. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 20, 25-6.

51. *Ibid.*, Part 3, pp. 20-2.

52. ORN I, 19, p. 387.

CHAPTER FOUR: *The Owl and the Comet*

1. (Washington, D. C.) *Daily Constitutional Union*, 2 March 1864. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

2. LC, Chase MSS, George M. Parsons to S. P. Chase, 8 June 1863; Mrs. Helen McDowell to S. P. Chase, 21 August 1862.

3. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

4. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-9.

5. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 93-5, 101-2.

6. Basler, *op. cit.*, V, p. 404. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 459-60.

7. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, p. 194.

8. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 470.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 473. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase, 13 September 1862.

10. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 466, 470. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
11. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, p. 153.
12. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 453-4.
13. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-5. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 434.
14. *Ibid.* D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
15. Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, X, pp. 1-3. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, p. 70.
16. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 440.
17. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, p. 415.
18. Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, X, pp. 1-3.
19. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
20. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 482.
21. George Templeton Strong, *The Diary of George Templeton Strong*, II, p. 591.
22. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 50. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 480, 491.
23. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 121. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 433, 438.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 445. LC, R. T. Lincoln MSS, Kate Chase to A. Lincoln, 17 February 1863. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
25. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 433, 487-8, 500.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 488. *New York Tribune*, 15 February 1891.
27. T. C. Smith, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 242-55, 265-7. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 August 1899.
28. Basler, *op. cit.*, VI, p. 485. United States Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, pp. 565-70. LC, E. M. Stanton MSS, Vol. 6, William Sprague to E. M. Stanton, 7 May 1862. LC, R. T. Lincoln MSS, William Sprague to A. Lincoln, 11 November 1862.
29. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, p. 139.
30. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, III, p. 318. Adams, *Education*, *op. cit.*, p. 104. Piatt, *op. cit.*, p. 39. (James) Jay Monaghan, *Diplomat in Carpet Slippers*, pp. 38, 54-7, 76. Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 137.
31. Frederick W. Seward, *Seward at Washington as Senator and Secretary of State*, III, p. 208.
32. Piatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-8. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, p. 205.
33. Pamphlet in Library of Congress, *Letter from John Hay to William Herndon*, 5 September 1866. Monaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 63. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 481, 484.
34. Library of Congress pamphlet, *Letter from John Hay to William Herndon*, 5 September 1866.
35. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-9. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 199.
36. Douglas Southall Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, II, p. 471. Browning, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 602-3. Francis Fessenden, *The Life and Public Services of William Pitt Fessenden*, I, pp. 231-40.

37. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 333.
38. Seward, *op. cit.*, II, p. 147.
39. Fessenden, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 240-3. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 338.
40. T. C. Smith, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 265-6.
41. Browning, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 602-4.
42. Fessenden, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 243-8.
43. *Ibid.*, I, p. 249. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 505. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 343. Browning, *op. cit.*, I, p. 592.
44. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 602-3.
45. Fessenden, *op. cit.*, I, p. 250.
46. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, p. 127. *The Crisis* (Columbus, Ohio), 25 November 1863, p. 350.
47. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-3.
48. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 201-2. Also Library of Congress, Gideon Welles Manuscript Collection, *Diary*, 20 December 1862.
49. Fessenden, *op. cit.*, I, p. 251. Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, VI, p. 12. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 510. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 224-6.
50. John Bigelow, *Letters and Literary Memorials of Samuel J. Tilden*, I, p. 233.

CHAPTER FIVE: *Jephthah's Daughter*

1. LC, Chase MSS, Clinton Rice to S. P. Chase, 29 October 1863.
2. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, p. 256.
3. LC, Chase MSS, Wm. G. Cochran and Co. to S. P. Chase, 26 October 1863; C. T. Webster to S. P. Chase, 12 November 1863; dressmaker's lawyer to S. P. Chase, October 1863. HSP, Cooke MSS, S. P. Chase to Jay Cooke, 24 October 1862.
4. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 259.
5. HSP, Chase MSS, Jay Cooke to S. P. Chase, 13 March 1863.
6. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 291-2.
7. *Cincinnati Times*, 15 August 1879.
8. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, p. 306. Also LC, Welles MSS, *Diary*, 19 May 1863. Used by permission. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 276.
9. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, p. 306.
10. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 274-5.
11. *Ibid.*, I, p. 275.
12. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 275-6. See also: HSP, Chase MSS, Letter Book, S. P. Chase to Jay Cooke, 14 February 1864.
13. Henry Seymour Hall, *Personal Experiences under Generals Burnside and Hooker*, pp. 111-2. Stoddard, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-200.

14. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 128. LC, Chase MSS, Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 31 May, 24 June 1863.
15. HSP, Chase MSS, Wm. Sprague to Hiram Barney, 5 July 1863; S. P. Chase to Kate Chase, 9 September 1863; S. P. Chase to Wm. Sprague, 14, 21 July 1863. LC, Chase MSS, Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 31 May, 18, 22 July, 20 August, 15 September 1863.
16. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase, 12 August 1863.
17. Field, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-3.
18. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 549, 385-6.
19. LC, Chase MSS, unsigned letter (Mrs. Whitman — ?) to S. P. Chase, 28 November 1863. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
20. LC, Chase MSS, Mrs. Stephen A. Douglas to S. P. Chase, 28 August 1862. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 468, 474, 477, 480-1, 487.
21. LC, Chase MSS, Mrs. C. S. Eastman to S. P. Chase, 30 September 1862, 19 July 1863.
22. HSP, Chase MSS, Letter Book, S. P. Chase to Mrs. Eastman, n. d. (p. 424 in Letter Book II).
23. LC, Chase MSS, Mrs. Eastman to S. P. Chase, 24 February 1873. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 567-8.
24. *Ibid.*
25. LC, Chase MSS, R. S. Hazard to S. P. Chase, 10 April 1860. Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 642. *Providence Evening Press*, 6 April 1860. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 320-9, 344-5.
26. LC, Chase MSS, Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 12, 23 June, 30 October 1863.
27. *Ibid.*, 12 June, 19 July 1863.
28. *Ibid.*, 4 November 1863.
29. Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, IX, p. 85.
30. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Wm. Sprague, 6 June 1863.
31. Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-30.
32. LC, Chase MSS, Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 4 November 1863.
33. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 130. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Wm. Sprague, 6 June, 14 July 1863.
34. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Hiram Barney, 23 September 1863. LC, Chase MSS, Chase's tailor to S. P. Chase, about 30 October 1863; Wm. Beckett to S. P. Chase, 28 March 1863; A. M. Brown to S. P. Chase, 27 March 1863; also itemized account of wedding expenses and bank balance, n. d., filed under 12 November 1863. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 277-8.
35. William Roscoe Thayer, *The Life and Letters of John Hay*, p. 105.
36. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to George Harrington, 19 November 1863.

37. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Manuscript Collection (Presidential Collection), Mrs. Lincoln to her dressmaker, n. d.
38. Description of the wedding: *New York Times*, *Washington Evening Star*, (Washington, D. C.) *Daily Chronicle*, all of 13 November 1863. See also: HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to George Harrington, 19 November 1863.
39. Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-9.
40. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
41. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, p. 456.
42. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 88. *New York Times*, 12, 13 November 1863. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 277-8. *Harper's Weekly*, 28 November 1863, p. 764.
43. *Washington Evening Star*, 16 November 1863. *Providence Evening Press*, *New York Times*, 19 November 1863.
44. LC, Chase MSS, Alice Skinner to S. P. Chase, 22 November 1863.
45. *Ibid.*, Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 21 November 1863.
46. *Providence Evening Press*, 25 November 1863.
47. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 92. Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-9.
48. *The Crisis* (Columbus, Ohio), 9 December 1863.
49. LC, Chase MSS, Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 16 November, 2 December 1863.

CHAPTER SIX: *The Bluebottle Fly*

1. ORN I, 19, pp. 454-5. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 15, 20, 22-4. United States Congress, 41st Congress, 3rd Session, *Senate Report No. 377*, p. 14. (Hereafter cited in the form SR 377, etc.) For a description of Hoyt's activities in Texas see: United States Archives, War Department Records Division, *Rebel Archives*, Harris Hoyt to Major S. Hart, 24 July 1863.
2. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 4, 15, 16, 22, 33, 41. ORN I, 20, pp. 488-9.
3. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 15-8. United States Archives, War Department Records Division, *Rebel Archives*, *Military Departments*, *Special Orders*, *District of Texas*, December 1862-September 1863, Chapter II, Vol. 3, p. 419 and Vol. 118, pp. 145-6; also *Letters Sent*, *District of Texas*, September 1863 (No. 560/79), General Magruder to General Scurry, 21 September 1863.
4. Welles, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 334-5, 389-90. (St. Louis) *Daily Missouri Democrat*, 17 November 1863. LC, Chase MSS, A. S. Mitchell to S. P. Chase, 31 October 1863.
5. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 22, 25, 35, 39. SR 377, pp. 15, 16. Late in February, 1863, the *Ella Warley*, one of the ships Sprague and his partners had purchased for the Texas Adventure, was sunk after a collision with another

steamer just outside New York Harbor. The ship was not insured, and the litigation over the damages dragged through the courts for decades. See: *Providence Journal*, 12 February 1863, and *New York Times*, 11, 12 February 1863.

6. *The Crisis* (Columbus, Ohio), 6 May 1863. United States Congress, 38th Congress, 1st Session, *House Report No. 111*, pp. 2, 4.

7. For the difficulty between Chase and Lincoln over Barney see: HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Hiram Barney, 3 February 1863; Wm. Sprague to Hiram Barney, 7 July 1863. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 407. United States Archives, Treasury Records Division, *Port Royal Correspondence, 1861-2*, p. 52; *Collector of the Port of New York*, Incoming Correspondence, No. 16, p. 489. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, pp. 478-9. *New York Times*, 3 January 1864. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Hiram Barney, 3 February 1863, 25 April, 3 May 1864; Kate Chase to Hiram Barney, 29 October 1861. Basler, *op. cit.*, VII, p. 120. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 556, 559-60, 572. Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, X, p. 6. Hiram Barney obliged Sprague in many ways: encouraging his match with Kate, taking two of his men into the customhouse, forwarding to Secretary Chase his recommendations on anything from ship purchases to appointments, and accepting Reynolds's faulty accounting of the Port Royal operation in behalf of the Treasury Department when Chase refused to do so. It was Barney's customhouse that cleared the arms and ammunition Hoyt took into Matamoras at the beginning of the Texas Adventure. How many similar favors the New Yorker did for Sprague remains a subject for speculation. For further particulars see: Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-30. United States Archives, Treasury Records Division, *Port Royal Correspondence, 1861-2*, p. 52, and *Collector of the Port of New York*, Incoming Correspondence, No. 16, p. 489. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 21-2. United States Congress, 38th Congress, 1st Session, *House Report No. 111*, pp. 158-74. United States Archives, *Restricted Commercial Intercourse*, No. 2, S. P. Chase to W. H. Reynolds, 18 June, 5, 13 August 1862.

8. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 525-8. Basler, *op. cit.*, VI, pp. 144, 202, 215. Noah Brooks, *Washington in Lincoln's Time*, pp. 119-21. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 405.

9. Edward Bates, *op. cit.*, p. 310. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 31. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

11. LC, Chase MSS, Thomas Heaton to S. P. Chase, 31 May, 30 June 1864.

12. Randall, *op. cit.*, pp. 231, 313-4.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 242. Dennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-1, 110. Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 412-3.

14. Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, IX, p. 85.

15. For further information on the H. D. Cooke-F. W. Hurtt scandal see: United States Congress, 43rd Congress, 1st Session, *House Executive Document* 255, Vol. 16, pp. 255, 324, 343; Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 517-21; Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 438; United States Congress, 45th Congress, 2nd Session, *House of Representatives Executive Document* 85, Vol. 17; United States Archives, War Department Records Division, *Correspondence between the Secretary of War and the Judge Advocate for the Department of Ohio*, November 1863-January 1864.

16. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 264, 295.

17. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 232, 243-9. Edward Bates, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

18. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 566. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 365, 442. HSP, Chase MSS, Wm. Orton to S. P. Chase, 5 December 1863, 8 January 1864.

19. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 557.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-44. (Washington, D. C.) *Sunday Morning Chronicle*, 21 February 1864. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, p. 632.

21. At the present time Chase's face graces the highest denomination Federal Reserve note (\$10,000). Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, IX, p. 395.

22. Edward Bates, *op. cit.*, p. 311. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

23. Charles Hubert Coleman, *The Election of 1868*, p. 70. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

24. Monaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 362. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

25. Basler, *op. cit.*, VII, p. 34. Randall, *op. cit.*, p. 242. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 481. See also: Keckley, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-30.

26. Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 412-3. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, p. 599.

27. *Ibid.*, II, p. 194.

28. Alexander Kelly McClure, *Our Presidents and How We Make Them*, p. 184.

29. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, p. 639.

30. Keckley, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-50.

31. Alexander Kelly McClure, *Abraham Lincoln and Men of War Times*, pp. 121-2.

CHAPTER SEVEN: *Forgive Us Our Friends*

1. Albert G. Riddle, *Recollections in War Times*, pp. 270-2.

2. Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 43. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to George Harrington, 19 November 1863.

3. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 387-9.

4. *Daily Missouri Democrat* (St. Louis), 23, 28, 29 September, 16 November 1863. *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 406, 426-7. William Ernest Smith, *The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics*,

- II, p. 250. LC, Chase MSS, A. S. Mitchell to S. P. Chase, 31 October 1863.
5. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-5. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 411. Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
6. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 364.
7. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 565, 570.
8. Wood Gray, *The Hidden Civil War, The Story of the Copperheads*, pp. 176-7. *Daily Constitutional Union* (Washington, D. C.), 26 February 1864.
9. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, p. 633. LC, Chase MSS, Lewis B. Ganckel to S. P. Chase, 12 February 1864.
10. *New York Times*, 14, 15 September 1874. Charnwood, *op. cit.*, p. 329.
11. *Daily Constitutional Union* (Washington, D. C.), 20 February 1864. *New York Times*, 15 September 1874.
12. *Daily Constitutional Union* (Washington, D. C.), 26 February 1864.
13. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 574.
14. *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 1st Session, p. 856; appendix, pp. 46-51.
15. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 574.
16. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 416. *Daily Constitutional Union* (Washington, D. C.), 11 March 1864. LC, Chase MSS, R. C. Parsons to S. P. Chase, 7 March 1864.
17. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 126. *New York Times*, 15 September 1874. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 365. HSP, Chase MSS, Chase Letter Books, S. P. Chase to Senator Pomeroy, 6 May 1864. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 422.
18. Thurlow Weed, *Memoirs of Thurlow Weed*, II, p. 445. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, p. 129, III, pp. 69-70. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 125, 129.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
20. *Daily Constitutional Union* (Washington, D. C.), 10 March 1864.
21. *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 1st Session, p. 878. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 132. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 222, 229, 262, 299, 308-9.
22. HSP, Chase MSS, Wm. P. Mellen to S. P. Chase, 27 February, 1 March 1864.
23. *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 1016-7. *Daily Missouri Democrat* (St. Louis), 5, 10, 23, 26, 30 October 1863. The original charges were made against Blair while he was in Missouri in October, 1863.
24. *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 1827-32.
25. Riddle, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 270-2.
27. Bigelow, *Tilden Letters*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 232-3. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 415.
28. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 585, 588. W. E. Smith, *op. cit.*, II, p. 261.
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30. *Ibid.*, pp. 581, 585.
31. LC, Chase MSS, J. B. Varnum to S. P. Chase, 12 September, 14 November 1863. Hesselstine, *op. cit.*, p. 353. Chicago Historical Society, Carriage Display, 1951.
32. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 610.
33. *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 1st Session, p. 3543.
34. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 623.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 602.
36. Field, *op. cit.*, p. 281.
37. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 613.
38. *Ibid.* Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
40. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 614, 619.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 619.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 618.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 620-4. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to John Cisco, 1 July 1864.
44. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 2 July 1864.
45. *Ibid.*, 11 July 1864.
46. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 510.
47. Edward Bates, *op. cit.*, pp. 381-2.
48. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 420-1.
49. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 617, 621.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 618.
51. Dennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-9. Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-8. Browning, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 686-7. LC, Chase MSS, Charles Sumner to S. P. Chase, 24 October 1864.
52. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

CHAPTER EIGHT: *As We Forgive Our Enemies*

1. Basler, *op. cit.*, V, p. 523; VII, p. 42; VIII, p. 142. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 123-8. Chase National Bank, pamphlet entitled *How the Phrase "In God We Trust" Came to Me on Our Coins*, December 1949. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to James Pollock, 20 November 1861.
2. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 434-5.
3. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 596. LC, Chase MSS, Jane Auld to S. P. Chase, 25 July 1864.
4. *Ibid.*, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 26 July 1864.
5. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-9. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 578.
6. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-3. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 455. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 441.
8. Joseph B. Foraker, *op. cit.*, II, p. 521. LC, Chase MSS, Wm. Stanton to S. P. Chase, 9 July, 29 August 1864. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 629.
9. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, III, p. 591. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 148. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 627.
10. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
11. Agar, *op. cit.*, pp. 430-3.
12. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 17 September 1864.
13. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, pp. 511-2.
14. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 23 September 1864. LC, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 26 August 1864.
15. David Donald (ed.), *Inside Lincoln's Cabinet: The Civil War Diaries of Salmon P. Chase*, pp. 251-2.
16. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 53. HSP, Chase MSS, E. M. Stanton to S. P. Chase, 13 October 1864. Strong, *op. cit.*, III, p. 500.
17. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 231.
18. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 512.
19. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Charles Sumner, 19 October 1864.
20. Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, IX, pp. 391-2.
21. Welles, *op. cit.*, II, p. 187.
22. Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 130. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, III, p. 592.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 630. See also Riddle, *op. cit.*, p. 313.
25. HSP, Chase MSS, W. P. Mellen to S. P. Chase, 2 December 1864.
26. Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, IX, pp. 391-2.
27. HSP, Chase MSS, W. P. Mellen to S. P. Chase, 17 November 1864. HSP, Dreer MSS (Presidents Collection), E. M. Stanton to S. P. Chase, 19 November 1864. LC, Chase MSS, Hiram Barney to S. P. Chase, 7 December 1864; E. J. Carson to S. P. Chase, 25 October 1864. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 464. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 595-6.
28. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
29. Riddle, *op. cit.*, p. 313.
30. Agar, *op. cit.*, p. 493.
31. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 462-3.
32. *Ibid.* Sandburg, *op. cit.*, III, p. 598.
33. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, pp. 512-3.
34. LC, Chase MSS, S. C. Pomeroy to S. P. Chase, 6 December 1864; Hiram Barney to S. P. Chase, 7 December 1864. Piatt, *op. cit.*, p. 123. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 630.
35. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

NOTES

6. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 566. LC, Chase MSS, Thomas Heaton to S. P. Chase, 30 June 1864; Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 26 July 1864. SP, Chase MSS, H. D. Cooke to S. P. Chase, 21 October 1864.
37. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 23-4, 33, 44.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 23, 25, 34.
39. United States Archives, Navy Records Division, *Log Book of the SS Iosco*, 20 November 1864. ORN I, 11, p. 80.
40. United States Archives, War Department Records Division, *AGO, Department of the East*, p. 124, General John A. Dix to Edwin M. Stanton, 3 March 1865. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 2-7, 22-4.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
43. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 601-2. Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-5.
44. SED 10, Part 3, p. 46.
45. *Providence Journal*, 9 December 1864. *New York Times*, 10 December 1864. *Providence Evening Press*, 10 December 1864. The *Press* was controlled by Sprague and the *Providence Journal* by his colleague Senator Anthony, but the rumors were so widespread in Providence that neither paper could afford to ignore them.
46. Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-5.
47. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 12, 19.
48. *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 77.
49. *Ibid.*, 2nd Session, pp. 642, 690.
50. United States Archives, War Department Records Division, *AGO, Department of the East*, p. 134.
51. Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 506-7. Welles, *op. cit.*, II, p. 264. Basler, *op. cit.*, VIII, p. 378.

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER ONE: *The Seeds of Doubt*

1. For description of Lincoln's second inauguration see: *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 18 March 1865, p. 403; Mary Smith Lockwood, *Yesterdays in Washington*, II, p. 130; Edna M. Colman, *Seventy-five Years of White House Gossip*, p. 306; Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 636; Leech, *op. cit.*, p. 370. The Chase carriage is on display at the Chicago Historical Society Museum.
2. *New York Herald*, 8 March 1865. Randall, *op. cit.*, pp. 370-1.

3. Basler, *op. cit.*, VIII, p. 403.
4. *Ibid.*, VIII, pp. 399-401. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, pp. 514-8.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 518.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 519.
7. *New York Herald*, 20 April 1865.
8. See Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*.
9. Edward Bates, *op. cit.*, p. 489. Reid, *op. cit.*, pp. 83, 586.
10. *New York Herald*, 1 June 1865. *New York World*, 22 May 1865. Reid, *op. cit.*, pp. 64, 585.
11. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 795.
12. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 24 June 1865.
13. United States Archives, War Department Records Division, *Bureau of Military Justice*, Record Book No. 15, pp. 282, 296.
14. *Providence Journal*, 31 October 1870, quoting letter from J. Holt, Judge Advocate General, to E. M. Stanton, 15 June 1865. SED 10, Part 3, p. 28. SR 377, p. 9.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6, 9. United States Archives, War Department Records Division, *AGO, Department of the East, Outgoing Correspondence*, 28 June 1865, p. 291; Record Book No. 9, p. 352, and 15-17 July 1865. SED 10, Part 3, p. 28. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, II, p. 102.
16. Reid, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-III, 143-4, 588-9.
17. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 24 June 1865.
18. *Harper's Monthly*, July 1879, p. 160. *Providence Daily Journal*, 16 August 1882, 12 October 1909. LC, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 26 July 1865.
19. *Ibid.*, Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 28 August 1865. HSP, Chase MSS, Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 6 September 1865; S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 4, 6, 16 September 1865.
20. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 28 March 1865.
21. *New York World*, 20 February 1870.
22. *New York Times*, 20 December 1880. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 19 June 1865.
23. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 5 May, 19 June 1866.
24. *New York World*, 14 September 1866. *Providence Journal*, 19 October 1866. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
25. *Providence Journal*, 19 October 1866. *Albany (New York) Evening Journal*, 23 October 1866.
26. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 2 July, 9 August 1866.
27. *Ibid.*, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 29 August 1871; S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 12 October 1866; S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 11 July, 22 August, 12 September 1867.

28. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 9, 31 August 1866; S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 10 September 1866. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 186.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 119. Albert Bushnell Hart, *Salmon Portland Chase*, p. 419. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 27 March 1867.
30. *Ibid.*, 15 October, 1, 27 November 1866; S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 31 August 1866.
31. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 2 July, 31 August, 12, 24 December 1866.
32. *Ibid.*, 24 January, 23 March 1867.
33. *Ibid.*, 31 January 1867.
34. Elizabeth Fries Ellet, *The Court Circle of the Republic, or the Beauties and Celebrities of the Nation*, p. 581. Elizabeth Fries Ellet, *The Queens of American Society*, p. 455. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 12 October 1866. *New York Herald*, 8 July 1865. Claude G. Bowers, *The Tragic Era, the Revolution after Lincoln*, p. 253. Mrs. Daniel Chester French, *Memories of a Sculptor's Wife*, p. 148. Peacock, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
35. Dennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 70, 259, 277. Adams, *Education*, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
36. Dennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-4, 266, 272. Thayer, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-9.
37. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 27 March 1867.
38. *Cincinnati Times*, 15 August 1879.
39. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Wm. Sprague, 10 December 1863, 2 May 1869; Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 17 July 1867; W. H. Coleman to A. B. Mullett, Supervising Architect, Treasury Department, 12 July 1867; S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 15 October, 1 November 1866; A. T. Stewart and Co. to S. P. Chase, 27 January 1867. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 637-8.
40. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 20 May, 19 June 1865; Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 6 September 1865. LC, Chase MSS, Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 28 August, 6 September 1865. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 60, 199.
41. *Ibid.*, II, p. 60.
42. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 60, 199.
43. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 59, 469, 479. LC, Chase MSS, Report of Income, 1866, 1867. In addition to his official salary of \$6500 per year, Chase had a private income of approximately \$7400 in 1866 and slightly less than \$9000 in 1867.
44. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 188-9. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 31 January, 8 March 1867.
45. Welles, *op. cit.*, III, p. 163. Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, IX, p. 389. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 635, 671-2.
46. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 17 August 1865.

47. LC, Chase MSS, Memo, Newby Chase to S. P. Chase, 19 November 1867. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 279. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 821-2.

CHAPTER TWO: *With Malice Toward Some*

1. Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic*, II, p. 35.
2. Bowers, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-9.
3. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 15 October 1866.
4. Strong, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 21, 148. David Miller Dewitt, *The Impeachment and Trial of Andrew Johnson*, pp. 272-7.
5. *New York Herald*, 20 January 1868.
6. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 74. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 668. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, pp. 536-7, 592. Charles Warren, *The Supreme Court in United States History* (1935), II, pp. 421-49, 487-8.
7. Dewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-5, 318-9. Bowers, *op. cit.*, p. 167.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 164. Dewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-8.
9. *New York World*, 25 February 1868.
10. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 550. *Congressional Globe*, 2 March 1868, p. 178.
11. *Ibid.* Bowers, *op. cit.*, p. 178. Welles, *op. cit.*, III, p. 299. *Baltimore Sun*, 2, 3 March 1868.
12. *Ibid.*, 13 March 1868.
13. Emily Edson Briggs, *The Olivia Letters*, p. 48. *New York World*, 4 April 1868.
14. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 79. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 54. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 22. *Philadelphia Evening Star*, 15 May 1868.
15. *Baltimore Sun*, 3, 5 March 1868. Dewitt, *op. cit.*, p. 389.
16. Strong, *op. cit.*, III, p. 209.
17. *New York World*, 23, 24 March 1868. *Baltimore Sun*, 14 March 1868. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 26 March 1868.
18. *Ibid.*, 18 April 1868. Peacock, *op. cit.*, p. 221. *Philadelphia Press*, 24 March 1868. *New York World*, 24 March, 5 April 1868.
19. *Ibid.*, 24 March 1868. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, pp. 576-7. *Baltimore Sun*, 14 March 1868. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 26 March 1868.
20. Adams, *Education*, *op. cit.*, p. 261. Strong, *op. cit.*, III, p. 209.
21. *New York World*, 31 March, 1 April 1868. Welles, *op. cit.*, III, p. 328. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 683.
22. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 17 May 1865. Reid, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-3. *New York Tribune*, 22 February 1891. LC, Chase MSS, Wm. Sprague to S. P. Chase, 21 August 1865.
23. Dewitt, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

24. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 684-5. Bowers, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
25. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 694. Adams, *Education, op. cit.*, p. 280.
26. *New York Herald*, 14 March 1868. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 576.
27. *New York Herald*, 22 March 1868.
28. Briggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 70.
29. *New York Herald*, 1 April 1868.
30. Dewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 515-7. Agar, *op. cit.*, p. 466.
31. Dewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 517-8, 530-1. (Washington, D. C.) *Daily (Morning) Chronicle*, 15 May 1868. *New York Herald*, 16 May 1868.
32. Dewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 517-8, 530-1. (Washington, D. C.) *Daily (Morning) Chronicle*, 15 May 1868. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 25 April, 11 May 1868.
33. Welles, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 336-7. Bowers, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
34. Welles, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 349, 356, 358.
35. William Archibald Dunning, *Reconstruction: Political and Economic, 1865-1877*, p. 107.
36. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 10 May 1868.
37. *Philadelphia Evening Star*, 15 May 1868.
38. *New York World*, 4 May 1868. Dewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 516-7. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 30 May 1868.
39. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Horace Greeley, 19 May 1868.
40. *New York World*, 12 May 1868. Dewitt, *op. cit.*, p. 521.
41. *New York Herald*, 16 May 1868. *New York World*, 13 May 1868.
- LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 10 May 1868; S. P. Chase to Hiram Barney, 13 May 1868.
42. *Philadelphia Evening Star*, 16 May 1868. Welles, *op. cit.*, III, p. 353.
43. *New York Herald*, 17 May 1868.
44. *Ibid.*, 16, 17 May 1868. Dewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 549-51. *New York Tribune*, 18 May 1868.

CHAPTER THREE: *The Bright Jewel*

1. *New York Herald*, 17 May 1868.
2. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 683.
3. (Washington, D. C.) *Daily (Morning) Chronicle*, 15, 18, 22 May 1868. United States Congress, 40th Congress, 2nd Session, *House Report No. 75*, pp. 4-6, 11, 13.
4. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 71. John Sherman, *John Sherman's Recollections of Forty Years in the House, Senate, and Cabinet*, I, p. 345. Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of Half a Century*, p. 187.

5. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, II, p. 61. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 11 July 1867.
6. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, II, p. 63. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 676.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 659-60, 689.
8. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, II, p. 64.
9. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 676-7, 680.
10. *New York Herald*, 22 March 1868. See also *Springfield (Mass.) Daily Republican*, 17 March 1868.
11. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 688-9. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 110-1. Agar, *op. cit.*, p. 492. Joseph Foraker, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 504-6. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 329.
13. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 8. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 691. Joseph Foraker, *op. cit.*, II, p. 528. James G. Blaine, *Twenty Years in Congress*, II, p. 393.
14. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 128. Welles, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 379, 382.
15. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 64-9.
16. Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-4. LC, Chase MSS, S. Ward to S. P. Chase, 26 June 1868; F. A. Aiken to S. P. Chase, 25, 26 June 1868; S. P. Chase to Jay Cooke, 17 July 1868. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 7 July 1868.
17. Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-9, 222. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 10 July 1868. *New York World*, 26 February 1868.
18. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 7 July 1868. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 676.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 581.
20. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
21. LC, Chase MSS, J. Livingston to S. P. Chase, 28 August 1868. HSP, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 2 July 1868.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, 5 July 1868. Strong, *op. cit.*, III, p. 221. *New York Herald*, 5 July 1868.
24. LC, Chase MSS, F. A. Aiken to S. P. Chase, 25 June 1868.
25. Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-8. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 704-5.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 637. Hay and Nicolay, *op. cit.*, IX, p. 399. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 584. Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-9.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-2.
28. *New York Herald*, 2 May 1868. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 697-8. Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-4. *Washington Evening Star*, 4 July 1868. LC, Chase MSS, H. S. Bundy to S. P. Chase, 22 May 1868.
29. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to J. Van Buren, 3 July 1868. Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-8.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-5.
31. HSP, Chase MSS, Gerrit Smith to S. P. Chase, 20 June 1868; Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 7 July 1868.
32. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 7 July 1868.
33. *Ibid.* Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 705.
34. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 229. HSP, Chase MSS, Hiram Barney to S. P. Chase, 26 June 1868; S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 7 July 1868.
35. *Ibid.*, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 2, 5 July 1868; J. C. Kennedy to S. P. Chase, 3 July 1868. Blaine, *op. cit.*, II, p. 393. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 224. *New York World*, 5 July 1868.
37. HSP, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 5, 7 July 1868. LC, Chase MSS, J. Van Buren to S. P. Chase, 24 July 1868. *New York Herald*, 8 July 1868.
38. Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-1, 231. HSP, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 10 July 1868.
39. While biding their time, the New Yorkers had been voting for Stanford E. Church. Fearing that he might be a serious candidate, Van Buren had gone to him with the pledge that if Chase got the nomination, he would recognize Church by giving him some good thing. ". . . I went to see him and gave to *him* the assurances which you authorized me to make to Tilden, if in my judgment I thought well," Van Buren told Chase. This incident indicates that Chase, despite his protestations to the contrary, was actively canvassing for the nomination during the convention as well as before it. *Washington Evening Star*, 8, 10 July 1868. *New York Herald*, 9 July 1868. *New York Tribune*, 9 July 1868. LC, Chase MSS, J. Van Buren to S. P. Chase, 24 July 1868.
40. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 239. Statement of Alexander Long in the *New York Herald*, 6 September 1868.
41. *New York Tribune*, 9 July 1868.
42. *Ibid.* Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 239.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 228. Piatt, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
44. *New York Herald*, 10 July, 6 September 1868. Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 214, 224-40. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 707-8. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 25 July 1868.
45. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 705.
46. LC, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 10 July 1868.
47. Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 420.
48. HSP, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 7 July 1868; S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 7 July 1868. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 705. Welles, *op. cit.*, III, p. 408.

49. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 708. Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-2. Agar, *op. cit.*, pp. 471-3.

50. *New York Herald*, 10 July 1868. Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *Political and Social Growth of the United States, 1852-1933*, p. 115.

CHAPTER FOUR: *Sprague for President*

1. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 272. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 10 July 1868.

2. *New York Tribune*, 11 July 1868. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 231. Joseph Foraker, *op. cit.*, II, p. 529.

3. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 14 November 1868.

4. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 25 July 1878, 23 August 1879. *New York Tribune*, 13 June 1865, 25 July 1866.

5. *Providence Journal*, 16 August 1882, 1, 6 August 1899. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 297. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 214. Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 1173. According to Warren Vincent Sprague, *Sprague Families in America*, p. 389, Canonchet had sixty-eight rooms.

6. Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

7. LC, Chase MSS, Janet Chase to S. P. Chase, 21 July 1868.

8. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Jane Auld, 8 October 1868; S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 14 November 1868. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

9. *New York Herald*, 2 January, 3 March 1869. Adams, *Education, op. cit.*, p. 260.

10. Bowers, *op. cit.*, pp. 268, 284.

11. *New York World*, 23 April 1869.

12. *Congressional Globe*, 41st Congress, 1st Session, 15 March 1869, pp. 64-6; 30 March 1869, pp. 360-2.

13. *Ibid.*, 30 March 1869, p. 358.

14. *New York Herald*, 14 April 1869. *Commercial and Financial (Weekly) Chronicle*, Vol. 8, No. 198, 10 April 1869, p. 454.

15. *Congressional Globe*, 19 March 1869, pp. 156-8; 24 March 1869, pp. 243-5.

16. *Ibid.*, 19 March 1869, p. 159.

17. Library of Congress, Gideon Welles Manuscript Collection, *Diary*, 27 March 1869. Used by permission.

18. *Congressional Globe*, 24 March 1869, pp. 243, 245.

19. Donald Barr Chidsey, *The Gentleman from New York*, p. 118. Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 763. *Congressional Globe*, 3 April 1869, p. 474.

20. *Ibid.*, 3 April 1869, p. 474; 30 March 1869, p. 360.

21. *Ibid.*, 30 March 1869, p. 362.
22. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 August 1879.
23. *Ibid.*, 12, 13 August 1879, 6 August 1899.
24. *Ibid.*, 1 August 1899.
25. *Ibid.*, 13 August 1879. *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 13 August 1879.
26. According to the voting record in the Senate, Sprague was absent from 18 January 1869 to 30 January 1869 and from 4 February 1869 to 10 February 1869. It must have been during one of those periods that he made his Southern trip, referred to in his speeches. Kate was in Narragansett during this period, according to her letters. A few years later Sprague himself disclaimed being the father of the child.
27. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 24 April 1869. *Congressional Globe*, 30 March 1869, pp. 358, 361.
28. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 8 April 1869.
29. *Congressional Globe*, 7 April 1869, p. 577; 8 April 1869, p. 614. *Providence Journal*, 10 April 1869.
30. *Congressional Globe*, 8 April 1869, pp. 614, 617.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 614-7.
32. *Ibid.*, 24 March 1869, p. 245; 8 April 1869, p. 614.
33. *Ibid.*, 8 April 1869, pp. 618-20.
34. *Ibid.*, 19 March 1869, p. 157.
35. *Providence Journal*, 14 April 1869.
36. *Ibid.*, 13, 14 April 1869.
37. *Commercial and Financial (Weekly) Chronicle*, Vol. 8, No. 198, 10 April 1869, p. 454. Woodrow Wilson: Federal Reserve Act (1913); Herbert Hoover: Agricultural Marketing Act (1929), Reconstruction Finance Corporation (1932), Federal Home Loan Bank Act (1932); Franklin D. Roosevelt: Emergency Banking Relief Act (1933), Farm Credit Act (1933).
38. Welles, *op. cit.*, III, p. 576. Adams, *Education, op. cit.*, pp. 271-2.
39. Worthington Chauncey Ford (ed.), *The Letters of Henry Adams*, I, p. 157.
40. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 12 April 1868. *New York Herald*, 16 April 1869. *Congressional Globe*, 8 April 1869, p. 615.
41. Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 115. *New York Herald*, 14 April 1869.
42. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 15 April 1869.
43. *New York Herald*, 16 April 1869.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, 23, 24, 26 April 1869. *New York World*, 27 April 1869. *Congressional Globe*, 41st Congress, 1st Session, pp. 744, 745, 776.
46. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 17 April 1869.
47. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 4 May 1869.

48. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 2 May 1869. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 17, 26, 29 April 1869. Sprague refused to give Kate money while she was out of Washington, and Chase finally took over her support.

49. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 26 April 1869.

50. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 4 May 1869. The remainder of the letter is missing. Sprague seems to have been very jealous of Colonel Crosby, and it is possible that Kate had an affair with him. Who the colonel was is impossible to say; but, according to the *Dictionary of American Biography*, there was a Colonel John S. Crosby, a year older than Kate, who left the army in 1870, becoming American consul in Florence in 1876, a post he held until 1882.

51. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 4 May 1869. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 29 April, 14 May 1869.

52. LC, Chase MSS (Letter Book), S. P. Chase to Wm. Sprague, 2 May 1869.

53. HSP, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 1 August, 15 September 1869.

54. *Ibid.*, 1 October 1869.

CHAPTER FIVE: *Trials May Come*

1. LC, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 29 August 1871; S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 7 November 1869.

2. Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

3. Ishbel Ross, *Proud Kate*, p. 219.

4. *New York World*, 20 February 1870.

5. *Ibid.*, 23 March 1871. Peacock, *op. cit.*, p. 222. *Providence Journal*, 1 November 1870. Janet Ralston Chase (Hoyt), *Mother Goose Melodies*. *New York World*, 23 March 1871.

6. Warren, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 450-525. Agar, *op. cit.*, p. 493. George Seawall Boutwell, *Reminiscences of Sixty Years in Public Affairs*, II, p. 29. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 619. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 October 1886.

7. Adams, *Education*, *op. cit.*, p. 282. James E. Pollard, *The Journal of Jay Cooke or the Gibraltar Records: 1865-1905*, pp. 225-6.

8. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Jay Cooke, 27 September 1870; S. P. Chase to Flamen Ball, 19 October 1870; S. P. Chase to R. C. Parsons, 26 September 1870. Parsons, clerk of the Supreme Court, was the recipient of frequent letters during Chase's convalescence. He handled Chase's business in Washington, including the building and remodeling at Edgewood.

9. LC, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 5 October 1868; E. C. Whipple to S. P. Chase, 5 March 1870; S. P. Chase to Col. H. C. Cabill, 6 December 1870.

10. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 719. *New York Tribune*, 28 October 1870. *Providence Journal*, 2 November 1870. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, pp. 619-20. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Dr. J. G. Perry, 28 September 1870.

11. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 15 October 1870; S. P. Chase to Dr. J. G. Perry, 24 October, 14, 17, 19 November 1870; S. P. Chase to Hiram Barney, 6 December 1870. *The Nation*, 6 November 1873.

12. *Providence Journal*, 12 October 1909. LC, Chase MSS, Hiram Barney to S. P. Chase, 9 December 1870.

13. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to H. C. Cabill, 6 December 1870.

14. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 4 May 1869; S. P. Chase to H. D. Cooke, 22 October, 19 November 1870; H. D. Cooke to S. P. Chase, 12 December 1870; E. L. Didier to Janet Chase, 12 October 1870. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 656. D. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

15. Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-31. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Jay Cooke, 17 November 1868; S. P. Chase to H. D. Cooke, 22 October 1870; S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 14 October 1870; S. P. Chase to Clinton Rice, 19 October 1870.

16. *Ibid.*, P. E. Jones to S. P. Chase, 12 November 1870; S. P. Chase to R. C. Parsons, 9 December 1870; R. C. Parsons to S. P. Chase, 7, 12, 13, 17 December 1870. Noah Brooks, *Statesmen*, p. 160.

17. LC, Chase MSS, R. C. Parsons to S. P. Chase, 2 December 1870 and, in general, correspondence between Chase and Parsons from October 1870-February 1871.

18. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase, 14 October 1870; E. L. Didier to Janet Chase, 12 October 1870; R. C. Parsons to S. P. Chase, 12 December 1870; S. P. Chase to Clinton Rice, 19 October 1870; S. P. Chase to H. D. Cooke, 22 October 1870. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, pp. 620-1.

19. LC, Chase MSS, R. C. Parsons to S. P. Chase, 10 February 1871; R. C. Parsons to S. P. Chase, 3 February 1871.

20. *Ibid.*, R. C. Parsons to S. P. Chase, 16 February 1871.

21. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to R. C. Parsons, 17 February 1871.

22. *New York World*, 23 March 1871.

23. United States Congress, 41st Congress, 3rd Session, *Senate Journal*, pp. 47, 52, 91, 92, 128, 178, 377, 435.

24. LC, Hamilton Fish MSS, H. B. Anthony to Hamilton Fish, 13 May 1869. *New York World*, 13 May 1869.

25. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 6, 7, 23, 24, 34. SR 377, pp. 12-3.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 12-3. United States Congress, 41st Congress, 2nd

Session, 1869-70, *Senate Report No. 166*, printed 16 May 1870, pp. 9-17.

27. *Providence Journal*, 31 October 1870.

28. *Ibid.*, 31 October, 2, 7 November 1870. For the acts of limitations on treason at the time see United States Congress, 1st Congress, 2nd Session (1790), Section 32 of the Crimes Act of 1790 (approved 30 April 1790). LC, T. A. Jenckes MSS, J. W. Thompson to T. A. Jenckes, 15 November 1870.

29. SED 10, Part 3, p. 6; Part 4, p. 2. LC, Chase MSS, William Sprague to S. P. Chase, 14 October 1862, 23 June 1863.

30. A. Maurice Low, *Blockade and Contraband*, pp. 4-12. The Supreme Court in the famous *Bermuda* and *Springbok* cases upheld the principle, promulgated in British courts in the *Essex* case (1805), that the cargo of a ship ostensibly headed for a neutral port was subject to confiscation if it could be proved conclusively that its ultimate destination was a blockaded port and that the neutral destination was a subterfuge. In the *Peterhoff* case the Court held that only contraband goods of cargoes destined for the Confederacy through a port not actually blockaded (in this case Matamoras, Mexico) were subject to confiscation. Chase, in consideration of these and other similar cases, became familiar with the manner in which the Texas Adventurers and others attempted to ship goods to blockaded Southern ports or to the Confederacy through Matamoras, Mexico, by the use of a neutral intermediate port, a ruse the Court declared invalid. Warren, *op. cit.*, II, p. 414.

31. *Providence Journal*, 4 November 1870.

32. *Ibid.*, 4, 5, 7 November 1870. *New York Herald*, 7 November 1873. SED 10, Part 3, pp. 26, 28, 34. "In leaving the firm of A. & W. Sprague [in November 1862] I wished to remain interested in this project, because I thought it a cheap and easy method of getting cotton for our factories," Byron Sprague had told Union army authorities. "But Governor Sprague refused to let me . . . because, he said, it was part of the concern that belonged to him by the terms of the contract on which he bought me out. . . ."

33. *Providence Journal*, 8 November 1870.

34. United States Congress, 41st Congress, 3rd Session, *Senate Journal*, pp. 47, 52, 91, 92, 128, 178, 377, 435. SR 377, p. 1.

35. LC, T. A. Jenckes MSS, Wm. Goddard to T. A. Jenckes, 19 December 1870. This critical letter is, unfortunately, partly illegible because of mildew. The Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress made every effort to produce a legible copy, but without success. The portion quoted is from the few lines that can be deciphered. *Ibid.*, S. W. Macy to T. A. Jenckes, 17 February 1871.

36. SR 377, pp. 6-16. SED 10, Part 1, pp. 1-2; Part 2, pp. 1-3; Part 3.
37. SR 377, pp. 8-16.
38. United States Archives, War Department Records Division, *AGO, Department of the East*, pp. 134-5, Major General John A. Dix to the Secretary of War, 22 March 1865. SR 377, pp. 14-8. (Italics are the authors'.)
39. Piatt, *op. cit.*, p. 98. *Congressional Globe*, 30 March 1869, p. 359.
40. *Providence Journal*, 28 February, 2, 3 March 1871. (Washington, D. C.) *Daily (Morning) Chronicle*, 24 March 1871.
41. *Washington Evening Star*, 23 March 1871.
42. *New York World*, 24 March 1871.
43. *Ibid.* *Washington Evening Star*, 23 March 1871. John Bigelow, *Retrospections of an Active Life*, IV, p. 480. (Washington, D. C.) *Daily (Morning) Chronicle*, 24 March 1871.
44. *Washington Evening Star*, 23, 24 March 1871. Description of reception: *New York World*, (Washington, D. C.) *Daily (Morning) Chronicle*, *Washington Evening Star*, 24 March 1871; also Peacock, *op. cit.*, p. 222; Briggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-5.
45. LC, Chase MSS, Janet Chase Hoyt to S. P. Chase, 30 April 1871; S. P. Chase to Janet Chase Hoyt, 22 May, 23 June 1871; health report for week ending 22 July 1871. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 725. *Washington Evening Star*, 23 March 1871.
46. LC, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, 29 August 1871.

CHAPTER SIX: *Death and Transfiguration*

1. LC, Chase MSS, W. S. Hoyt to S. P. Chase, 14 January 1872; S. P. Chase to Janet Chase Hoyt, 23 January, 4 February 1871; Janet Chase Hoyt to S. P. Chase, 6 January 1871.
2. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase Hoyt, 8 March 1872.
3. *Ibid.*, S. P. Chase to Janet Chase Hoyt, 23 January, 16 February 1872; S. P. Chase to Flamen Ball, 17 October 1872.
4. *Ibid.*, Jay Cooke to S. P. Chase, 6 March 1872. Briggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-2. *Washington Evening Star*, 23 February 1871.
5. *New York World*, 28 April 1872.
6. Schurz, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
7. LC, Chase MSS, H. Barney to S. P. Chase, 6 January 1872.
8. Henry Watterson, *Marse Henry: An Autobiography*, p. 242. LC, Chase MSS, [unsigned] to S. P. Chase, 13 November 1871. Agar, *op. cit.*, p. 491.
9. *Providence Journal*, 12 October 1909. LC, Chase MSS, H. Barney to S. P. Chase, 6 November 1872.

10. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 729-31, 753, 757-9.
11. Chase probably was referring to emancipation and the National Banking Act. *Ibid.*, p. 766.
12. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to a cousin, September 1869.
13. Sandburg, *op. cit.*, II, p. 628. Warden, *op. cit.*, title page. Royal Cortissoz, *The Life of Whitelaw Reid*, I, p. 198.
14. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 791-2. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 October 1886.
15. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 10 May 1868.
16. Julia Bundy Foraker, *I Would Live It Again: Memories of a Vivid Life*, pp. 75-6. Ford, *op. cit.*, I, p. 183. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 15, 772.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 14-15, 772, 791.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 265-71. (Italics are the authors'.)
19. *Ibid.*, p. 772.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, p. 803.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 796-7.
23. Warren, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 535-51. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 622.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 623. *Washington Evening Star*, 7 May 1873. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 18 October 1886. *New York World*, 8 May 1873. *New York Tribune*, 12 May 1873.
25. Warren, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 532, 551-2.
26. Ames, *op. cit.*, p. 146. *Washington Evening Star*, 12 May 1873.
27. For description of the official ceremony honoring Chase and his burial in Oak Hill Cemetery in Georgetown see: *Ibid.*, 8, 9, 10, 12 May 1873; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 October 1886; *New York World*, 8, 9, 10, 11 May 1873; *New York Tribune*, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 May 1873. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 625. *Washington Evening Star*, 12 May 1873.
28. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 705. Piatt, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
29. LC, John G. Nicolay MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to John Nicolay, 3 November 1876.
30. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 806. For a description of the previous trouble between Kate and Warden see Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 770-1.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 381, 674, 812-3.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 383.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 517, 521, 575, 812, 815, 816.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 818.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 291. LC, R. T. Lincoln MSS, Kathryne Chase to Abraham Lincoln, 17 February 1863.
36. *New York Herald*, 16 March 1874. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 274, 774.
37. HSP, Chase MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to J. W. Schuckers, 27 June 1873. *New York Herald*, 16 March 1874. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 591, 675. LC,

Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to J. W. Schuckers, 26 October 1870; S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 4 September 1865.

38. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 401-2.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 400-5, 673, 774-5. HSP, Chase MSS, Jay Cooke to J. W. Schuckers, 5 July 1873.

40. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 673. HSP, Chase MSS, Jay Cooke to J. W. Schuckers, 5 July 1873.

41. *Ibid.*, Kate Chase Sprague to J. W. Schuckers, 29 October 1873; Gerrit Smith to J. W. Schuckers, 25 May 1873; Gerrit Smith to Kate Chase Sprague, 28 May 1873; refer particularly to HSP, Chase MSS, H. Barney to J. W. Schuckers, 13 September 1873, which indicates he sent a letter on convention of 1868, a letter which is not in HSP collection.

42. *Ibid.*, Kate Chase Sprague to Gerrit Smith, 23 July 1873, 16 January 1874, 17 March 1874. Bigelow, *Retrospections*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 513.

43. *New York Herald*, 16 March 1874.

44. Warden, *op. cit.*, p. 819.

45. *New York Herald*, 16 March 1874. Schuckers, *op. cit.*, p. 618.

46. Warden, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-2. Robert B. Warden, *An Appeal by the Author of the Best Abused Book of the Period*.

CHAPTER SEVEN: *The Prince of New York*

1. Oberholtzer, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 421-2. Agar, *op. cit.*, p. 501.

2. *Providence Journal*, 12 October 1909. *New York Times*, 20 December 1880. *New York Herald*, 7 November 1873. Carroll, *op. cit.*, pp. 520-1, 524, 654, 762-73, 806-8.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 762. *New York Herald*, 7 November 1873.

4. *Washington Evening Star*, 17 May 1873. Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 418. LC, John G. Nicolay MSS, Kate Chase Sprague to John Nicolay, 22 April 1874.

5. Henry Adams, *Democracy*, p. 191.

6. Chidsey, *op. cit.*, p. 116. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 August 1879.

7. French, *op. cit.*, p. 150. Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 107. *Philadelphia Press*, 12 March 1870.

8. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 August 1879. *Dictionary of American Biography*, IV, p. 346. Chidsey, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 5, 115-6.

9. Agar, *op. cit.*, pp. 495-6. Adams, *Democracy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3. Other clues in *Democracy* indicate that Adams may have used Chase as the basis for his character Senator Ratcliff.

10. Chidsey, *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 147, 259.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 91. Adams, *Education*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

12. Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 695.
13. Before going back to Rhode Island, Kate held an auction on the second anniversary of her father's death to dispose of some of his things; but she made little money from the affair, for she reserved all his choice possessions for herself. Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-3.
14. *New York Times*, 20 December 1880. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 August 1879.
15. Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 301, 303-4, copied from a pamphlet entitled *The Merchant's Wife* by Mary Eliza Viall [Andersen], (Shepley Library, Providence, Rhode Island).
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 301-4. *New York Times*, 20 December 1880.
17. *Ibid.*, 15 February 1877. Chidsey, *op. cit.*, pp. 208, 224-5. Agar, *op. cit.*, pp. 509-10. Rutherford Burchard Hayes, *Diary and Letters of Rutherford B. Hayes* (Charles Richard Williams, ed.), III (1865-1881), pp. 390-1.
18. Bigelow, *Retrospections*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 513.
19. *Ibid.*, *Washington Post*, 12 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 August 1879. *New York World*, 10 August 1879. Bigelow, *Tilden*, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 511-13. In defending his client, Kate's lawyer chose to ignore the press reports of 1879 regarding her influence and insisted, contrary to fact, that there had been no public attempt to blame her until twenty-five years afterward.
20. *New York Evening Post*, 30 June 1900. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 August 1879. McClure, *Presidents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-9.
21. Chidsey, *op. cit.*, p. 239.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-53. Agar, *op. cit.*, pp. 520-1.
24. *Washington Post*, 19 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 August 1879.
25. *Ibid.* *Washington Post*, 11 August 1879.
26. Chidsey, *op. cit.*, p. 119. John Logan, *op. cit.*, p. 307.
27. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 August 1879, 1 August 1899. *New York Evening Post*, 18 April 1888. Peacock, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-5.
28. *Washington Post*, 11 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 August 1879.
29. *Ibid.*, 15 August 1879. *New York Sun*, 17 August 1879. *New York Times*, 20 December 1880. *New York World*, 14 August 1879.
30. *Ibid.*, 14 August 1879, 6 August 1899. *New York Sun*, 18 August 1879. *Providence Journal*, 12 October 1909.
31. *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 3rd Session, 28 February 1879, p. 2103.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 1879, 2104-5; 3 March 1879, p. 2299 (H. R. 6471 Amend-

ments, line 162). *Washington Post*, 11 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 15 August 1879.

33. For Conkling-Lamar affair see Edward Mayes, *Lucius Q. C. Lamar: His Life, Times, and Speeches 1825-1893*, pp. 379-89; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 August 1879; *New York Tribune*, 19 June 1879; *New York Sun*, 17 August 1879; *Washington Post*, 11, 17 August 1879; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 11 August 1879.

34. *Washington Post*, 11 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 15 August 1879. *New York World*, 13 August 1879.

CHAPTER EIGHT: *The Gilded Lady*

1. *Harper's Monthly*, July 1879. *New York Herald*, 1 September 1879.

2. *New York Times*, 20 December 1880. *New York World*, 2 September 1879.

3. *Ibid.*, 12 August, 2 September 1879.

4. *Ibid.*, 12, 18 August 1879. *New York Sun*, 17 August 1879.

5. *New York World*, 12 August 1879.

6. *Ibid.*, 11 August 1879.

7. *Ibid.*, 18 August 1879.

8. *Ibid.*, 11, 18 August 1879. *New York Sun*, 15 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 August 1879.

9. *New York Sun*, 17 August 1879.

10. The Sprague-Conkling incident is pieced together from newspapers representing the views of both parties. The main sources used were: *New York Sun*, 11-17 August 1879; *New York Times*, 11-17 August 1879; *Washington Post*, 12-19 August 1879.

11. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 August 1879. *New York World*, 14, 18 August 1879. *Washington Post*, 19 August 1879.

12. *Washington Post*, 15, 16 August, 1 October 1879. *New York Sun*, 15 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 August 1879. George Frederick Howe, *Chester A. Arthur, A Quarter of a Century of Machine Politics*, p. 95.

13. *Washington Post*, 12 August 1879.

14. *Ibid. Cincinnati Times*, 13 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12, 13 August 1879. *New York World*, 10 August 1879.

15. *The Nation*, 21 August 1879.

16. *New York Sun*, 13 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 16 August 1879. *Washington Post*, 12 August 1879. *Baltimore Sun*, 20 August 1879. *New York World*, 14 August 1879.

17. *Baltimore Sun*, 3 September 1879. See also (Washington, D. C.) *Forney's Sunday Chronicle*, 17 August 1879.
18. Henry Watterson's *Louisville Courier-Journal* summarization of the press treatment of the Sprague-Conkling affair, cited in the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 19 August 1879.
19. *New York Tribune*, 20 August 1879.
20. Cortissoz, *op. cit.*, I, p. 372. *Baltimore Sun*, 20 August 1879. *Washington Post*, 11 August 1879. *New York World*, 18 August 1879.
21. *The Nation*, 28 August 1879. *New York World*, 12 August 1879. Hayes, *op. cit.*, III, p. 570. Date of diary entry 14 August 1879.
22. *New York World*, 10, 11, 12 August 1879. *New York Times*, 12, 13 August 1879. *Providence Journal*, 11, 18 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 August 1879.
23. *New York World*, 12, 15 August 1879. *Washington Post*, 11 August 1879.
24. *Ibid.*, 12 August 1879. *New York World*, 5 March 1873, 2 September 1879.
25. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 August 1879. *Providence Journal*, 14 August 1879. *Baltimore Sun*, 14 August 1879. *Washington Post*, 16 August 1879.
26. *New York World*, 14, 15, 18 August 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 August 1879. *New York Sun*, 17 August 1879.
27. *Baltimore Sun*, 2 September 1879. *Washington Post*, 16 August, 2, 3, 4 September 1879. *New York Sun*, 15 August 1879. *New York World*, 15 August, 2 September 1879. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 15 August, 1 September 1879.
28. *New York Sun*, 17 August 1879. Reprinted in *New York World*, 18 August 1879, and *Washington Post*, 19 August 1879. See also Kate's previous version in *Providence Journal*, 14 August 1879.
29. *New York World*, 18 August 1879.
30. *Washington Post*, 3 September 1879.
31. *Baltimore Sun*, 20 August 1879. *New York World*, 17, 18 August 1879.
32. *Ibid.*, 2 September 1879.
33. *New York Sun*, 31 August 1879.
34. *New York World*, 2 September 1879. *Washington Post*, 4 September 1879.
35. *Ibid.*, 2 September 1879.
36. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 September 1879. *New York World*, 2 September 1879. *Washington Post*, 3 September 1879.
37. *Washington Post*, 20 September 1879.
38. LC, Chase MSS, S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, 10 May 1868.

CHAPTER NINE: *Pillar of Salt*

1. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 15, 16 August 1879. *Independent* (Magazine), 21 August 1879. *Cincinnati Times*, 20 August 1879. *Washington Post*, 20 September 1879.
2. Briggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 400-1.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 401. *Providence Journal*, 28 January 1881.
4. Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 404.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 404-8.
6. For material regarding Sprague's legal battles over his property see: *Washington Post*, 20 September 1879; *Baltimore Sun*, 6 September 1879; *New York Sun*, 20, 21, 27, 28 September 1879.
7. *New York Times*, 30 December 1880.
8. *Ibid.*, 20 December 1880, 18, 28 January 1881.
9. *New York Tribune*, 28 May 1882, 14 April 1883.
10. Agar, *op. cit.*, p. 528.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 533. Chidsey, *op. cit.*, p. 361.
12. Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 263, 272, 274.
13. *New York Times*, 29 October 1880. Carroll, *op. cit.*, pp. 654, 762-73.
14. *New York Sun*, 3 September 1879.
15. *New York Times*, 29 October 1880. *Providence Journal*, 16 August 1882. Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 772.
16. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 6 August 1899. *New York Tribune*, 25 December 1882, 9, 15 March 1883. *Providence Journal*, 15, 17, 21 March 1883.
17. Carroll, *op. cit.*, pp. 654, 765, 1186. *New York Times*, 1 April 1883. Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 307. Agar, *op. cit.*, p. 544. *Providence Journal*, 24, 28, 29 March, 3, 4, 5 April 1883, 12 October 1909. Poore, *Burnside*, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-84.
18. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 October 1886. *New York Tribune*, 28 May 1882.
19. Julia Foraker, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
20. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13, 15 October 1886.
21. *Ibid.*, 13, 14, 15 October 1886. See also *New York Tribune*, 14 October 1886.
22. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13, 14, 15 October 1886. Joseph Foraker, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 231-2.
23. *Providence Journal*, 12 September 1915. *New York World*, 6 August 1899. *New York Tribune*, 26 October 1887.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 87, 228 (picture).

26. *New York Tribune*, 26 October 1887, 12, 13, May 1899. *Providence Daily Journal*, 12 October 1915. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
27. *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, 8 October 1890.
28. *Ibid.* Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 269. *New York Tribune*, 12 October 1890. *Providence Journal*, 22 October 1890, 23 June 1907, 12 October 1909.
29. *Ibid.*, 15 October 1890. *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, 8 October 1890. *Providence Journal*, 15 October 1890.
30. *Ibid.*, 22 October 1890. *New York Tribune*, 12 October 1890.
31. *Providence Journal*, 22 October 1890.
32. Chidsey, *op. cit.*, pp. 363, 374, 387.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 364, 368, 384.
34. *New York World*, 1 August 1899. *New York Tribune*, 1 August 1899. *Providence Journal*, 1 August 1899, 12 September 1915. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 274.
35. Lockwood, *Yesterdays*, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
36. *New York Tribune*, 15, 22 February 1891.
37. Peacock, *op. cit.*, p. 214. *Washington Post*, 1 August 1899. *New York Herald*, 28 July 1895.
38. Phelps, *op. cit.*, pp. 274, 280. *Washington Post*, 1 August 1899. *New York Tribune*, 1 August 1899.
39. *New York Sun*, 2 August 1895. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 276. *New York Tribune*, 15 July 1895.
40. *New York Sun*, 2 August 1895.
41. *New York Herald*, 28 July 1895.
42. Ross, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-80.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
44. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 279.
45. *New York Tribune*, 16 April 1896, 1 August 1899. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 277. Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 279.
46. Peacock, *op. cit.*, p. 229. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 275. *New York Tribune*, 12 May 1899. *New York World*, 1 August 1899.
47. *New York Tribune*, 12 May 1899.
48. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 3 August 1899. *Providence Journal*, 3 August 1899. *Washington Post*, 1 August 1899. Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 282.
49. *Ohio State Journal*, 4 August 1899. *Washington Post*, 1 August 1899. *New York World*, 6 August 1899. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 6 August 1899.
50. LC, Chase MSS, Series II, Vol. 4, n. d. The first stanza and part of the second have been omitted.

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1. *New York Tribune*, 12 April 1898.
 2. William Sprague to Eugene L. Didier, 29 October 1907, letter in possession of the authors.
 3. *Providence Journal*, 12 October 1909.
 4. *Ibid.*
 5. *Providence Journal*, 12 October 1909. *New York Tribune*, 28 May 1882. *New York Times*, 12 September 1915 (Section II, p. 7).
 6. Shoemaker, *op. cit.*
 7. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.
 8. *Providence Journal*, 12 September 1915. *New York Times*, 12 September 1915.
 9. *Ibid.*, 1 October 1915.
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